BLACK GATE
the black gate does not wait for the soul to die
2

Hijiri
THE CHILD OF YOSHITSUNA, LEADER OF THE GATE-KEEPERS, WHO, BY BLOOD, POSSESSES THE SUPERNATURAL POWERS OF ALL GATE-KEEPERS. HE LIVES ALONE IN A DORMITORY NEXT TO HAZAMA'S BAR AS HE CONTINUES HIS MITEDAMASHI TRAINING
Senju
A HUMAN WHO MAKES A LIVING AS A MITEDAMASHI RAISED BY YOSHITSUNA, SENJU BECAME HIJIRI'S GUARDIAN. AFTER TELLING HIJIRI THE TRUTH ABOUT HIS PARENTS' DEATHS, HE LEAVES HIJIRI. HIS WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN
OLD MAN HAZAMA
Hazama-no-Oyaji
OWNER OF THE BAR WHERE THE MITEDAMASHI GATHER. HE ALSO OFFERS COMPENSATION TO MITEDAMASHI FOR CLOSED GATES.
kikyo
YOSHITSUNA'S COCKY YOUNGER BROTHER KNOWN FOR HIS TRADEMARK PHRASE, "I'M GONNA TELL EVERYONE."

Characters & Story Guide

The story so far... BLACK GATE

IN THIS WORLD, THERE EXIST CERTAIN "PATHWAYS FOR THE SOULS," OTHERWISE CALLED "SPIRITUAL PATHWAYS" OR "GATES." NORMALLY, WHEN THE BODY OF A LIVING THING DIES, ITS SOUL SEPARATES FROM THE BODY AND PASSES THROUGH WHAT IS CALLED A "WHITE GATE" ON ITS WAY TO ITS NEXT EXISTENCE. BUT THERE ALSO EXIST "BLACK GATES," WHICH ARE RARE, BUT DANGEROUS. NOT CONTENT SIMPLY WITH THE SOULS OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED NATURALLY, THESE BLACK GATES ATTEMPT TO FORCEFULLY PULL IN THE SOULS OF THINGS STILL ALIVE. BLACK GATES ARE KNOWN TO START ACCIDENTS SUCH AS MYSTERIOUS FIRES AND OTHER DISASTERS WITH UNKNOWN CAUSES, IN THEIR ATTEMPT TO DEVOUR MORE SOULS.

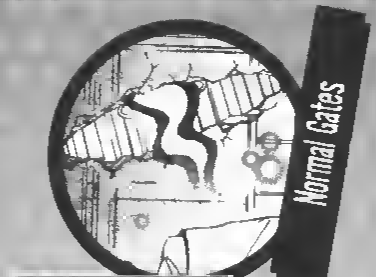
THERE ARE THOSE AMONG US WITH THE POWER TO SEE AND CLOSE THESE DANGEROUS GATES. THESE RARE INDIVIDUALS ARE CALLED "MITEDAMASHI."

ONE SUCH MITEDAMASHI, SENJU, HAS BEEN THE GUARDIAN TO HIJIRI, A YOUNG BOY AND THE SON OF SENJU'S BENEFACTOR. AS HE'S GROWN OLDER, THE ABILITY TO DETECT AND CLOSE GATES HAS BEGUN TO AWAKEN WITHIN HIJIRI. NOTICING HIJIRI'S POWERS GROWING STRONGER BY THE DAY, SENJU DECIDES TO TELL HIJIRI THE TRUTH OF HIS PARENTS' DEATHS AND HIS OWN ORIGINS.

LONG AGO, HIJIRI'S FATHER, YOSHITSUNA, WAS THE LEADER OF THE GATE-KEEPERS. HE LIVED WITH HIS WIFE, KUZUNOHA, AND HIS YOUNGER BROTHER, KIKYO. TOGETHER, THEY CARED FOR THE HUMAN, SENJU, THEN JUST A YOUNG BOY.

THEIR DAYS OF PEACE, HOWEVER, WERE BRIEF. A MOB OF HUMAN BEINGS, DEMANDING IMMORTALITY, KILLED YOSHITSUNA, KUZUNOHA, AND KIKYO, LEAVING SENJU TO CARE FOR HIJIRI. AFTER TELLING HIJIRI THIS STORY, SENJU LEAVES HIM, VANISHING INTO SOME UNKNOWN DESTINATION.

LEFT TO FEND FOR HIMSELF, HIJIRI DETERMINES TO BECOME A GREAT MITEDAMASHI AND TO SEEK OUT SENJU.



Yoshitsuna
SENJU'S BENEFACTOR AND HIJIRI'S FATHER. HE WAS THE LEADER OF THE GATE-KEEPERS BUT WAS KILLED BY A MOB OF HUMANS DEMANDING IMMORTALITY. BEFORE DYING, HE ENTRUSTED HIJIRI TO SENJU'S PROTECTION.

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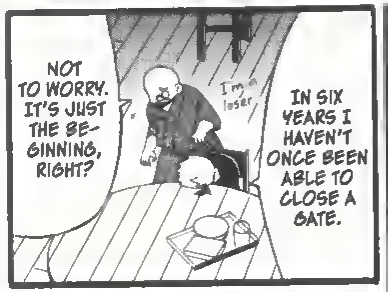
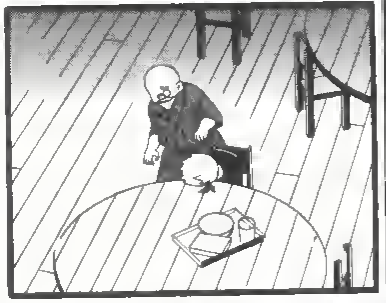
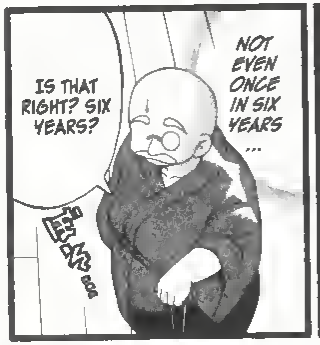
AFTER SENJU DISAPPEARED, I MADE A DECISION.
ONE. PATH OF THE LITTLE ONES.
TO ATTAIN THE POWER OF THE MITEDAMASHI IN ORDER TO PROTECT MYSELF.
TWO. PATH OF THE SPECTER.
UNFORTUNATELY...
GATE...
I HAVE SO LITTLE SKILL IT'S SCARY.
NO WORRIES! NO WORRIES, HIJIRI-KUN!
HIJIRI LOVE
BE S... EAL...

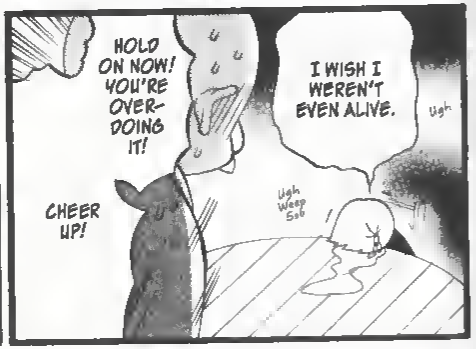
SOMEONE WILL TRY TO KILL ME...
SOMEDAY...

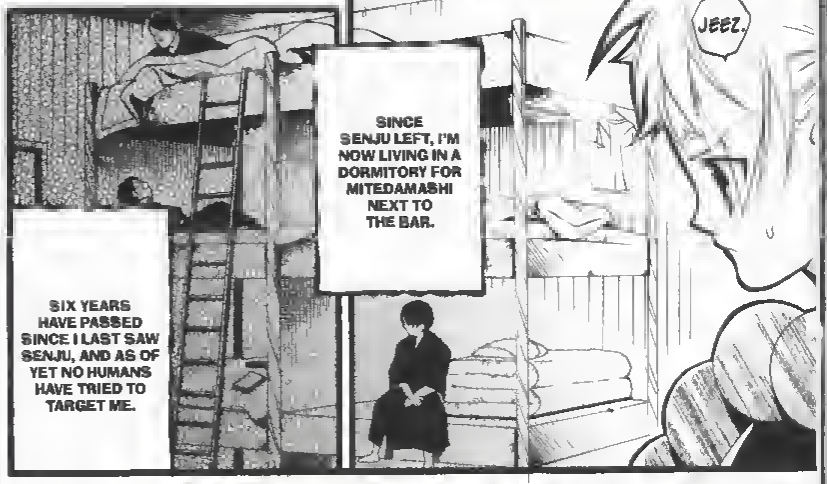

NOT TO WORRY. IT'S JUST THE BE-GINNING, RIGHT?
I'm a loser
IN SIX YEARS I HAVEN'T ONCE BEEN ABLE TO CLOSE A GATE.



BUT...
I'M... HOPE-LESS...


IS THAT RIGHT? SIX YEARS?
NOT EVEN ONCE IN SIX YEARS ...

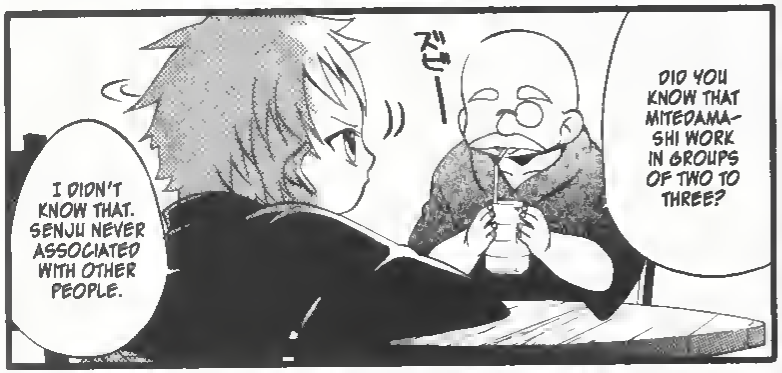

HOLD ON NOW! YOU'RE OVER-DOING IT!
CHEER UP!
I WISH I WEREN'T EVEN ALIVE.
Ugh
Ugh Weep Sob

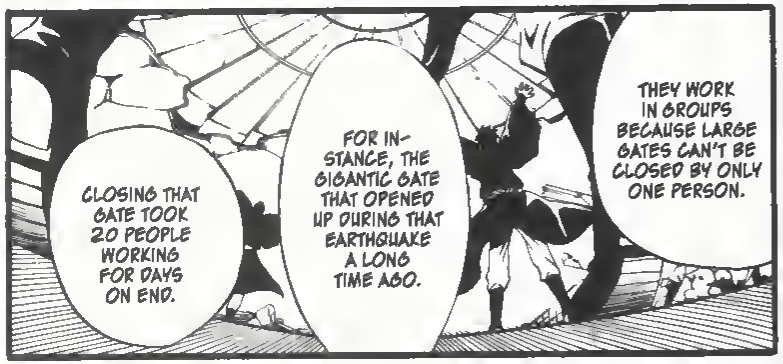

SIX YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE I LAST SAW SENJU, AND AS OF YET NO HUMANS HAVE TRIED TO TARGET ME.
SINCE SENJU LEFT, I'M NOW LIVING IN A DORMITORY FOR MITEDAMASHI NEXT TO THE BAR.
JEEZ.

...SO IT SEEMS.
IT'S ALL RIGHT! NO ONE HAS SENSED YOUR POWERS.
THE REASON IS MY POWERS AS THE LEADER OF THE GATE-KEEPERS HAVE NOT FULLY AWOKEN.

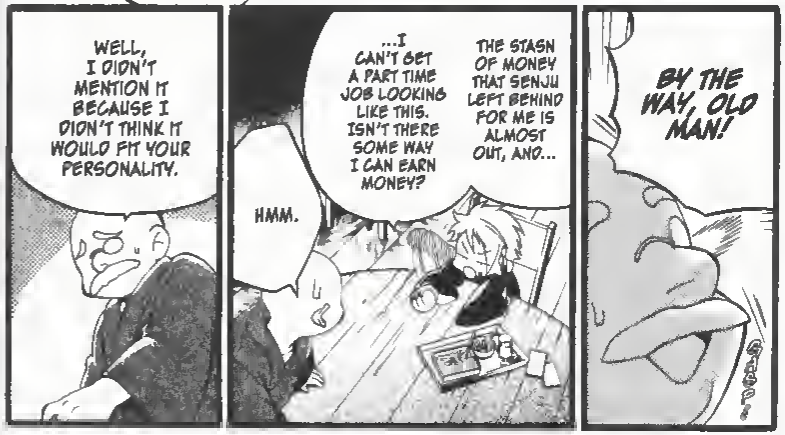
BUT RIGHT NOW, WHAT I NEED ARE THE SKILLS TO PROTEGT MYSELF...THE SKILLS ONLY A MITEDAMASHI KNOWS.
HOWEVER, A GREAT DEAL OF A GATE-KEEPER'S POWERS ARE ONLY REALIZED IN ONE "CERTAIN PLACE."

A PARTNER?


DID YOU KNOW THAT MITEDAMA-SHI WORK IN GROUPS OF TWO TO THREE?
ズビー
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT. SENJU NEVER ASSOCIATED WITH OTHER PEOPLE.


THEY WORK IN GROUPS BECAUSE LARGE GATES CAN'T BE CLOSED BY ONLY ONE PERSON.
FOR IN-STANCE, THE GIGANTIC GATE THAT OPENED UP DURING THAT EARTHQUAKE A LONG TIME AGO.
CLOSING THAT GATE TOOK 20 PEOPLE WORKING FOR DAYS ON END.

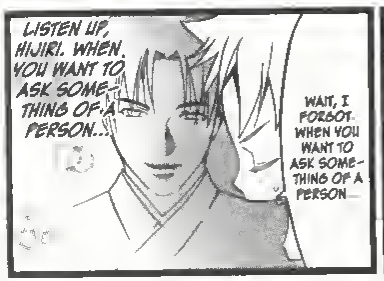
むぎゅ
YOU'RE 18 YEARS OLD ALREADY.
I WONDER WHY THIS KID HASN'T GROWN SINCE HE WAS 12 YEARS OLD.

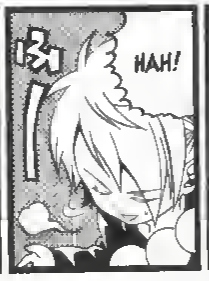

WELL, I DIDN'T MENTION IT BECAUSE I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD FIT YOUR PERSONALITY.
HMM.
...I CAN'T GET A PART TIME JOB LOOKING LIKE THIS. ISN'T THERE SOME WAY I CAN EARN MONEY?
THE STASH OF MONEY THAT SENJU LEFT BEHIND FOR ME IS ALMOST OUT, AND...
BY THE WAY, OLD MAN!

AH!
THERE'S A NEW FACE. I'LL TRY AND HAVE A WORD WITH HIM.

STOP ANNOYING ME.
.....

HEY YOU! NEW AROUND HERE, EH? WHAT'S YOUR NAME?


LISTEN UP, HIJIRI. WHEN YOU WANT TO ASK SOMETHING OF A PERSON...
WAIT, I FORGOT. WHEN YOU WANT TO ASK SOMETHING OF A PERSON—


HAH!

EVEN IF I WERE TO SAY YES, I DON'T HAVE ANYONE TO TEAM UP WITH!
!

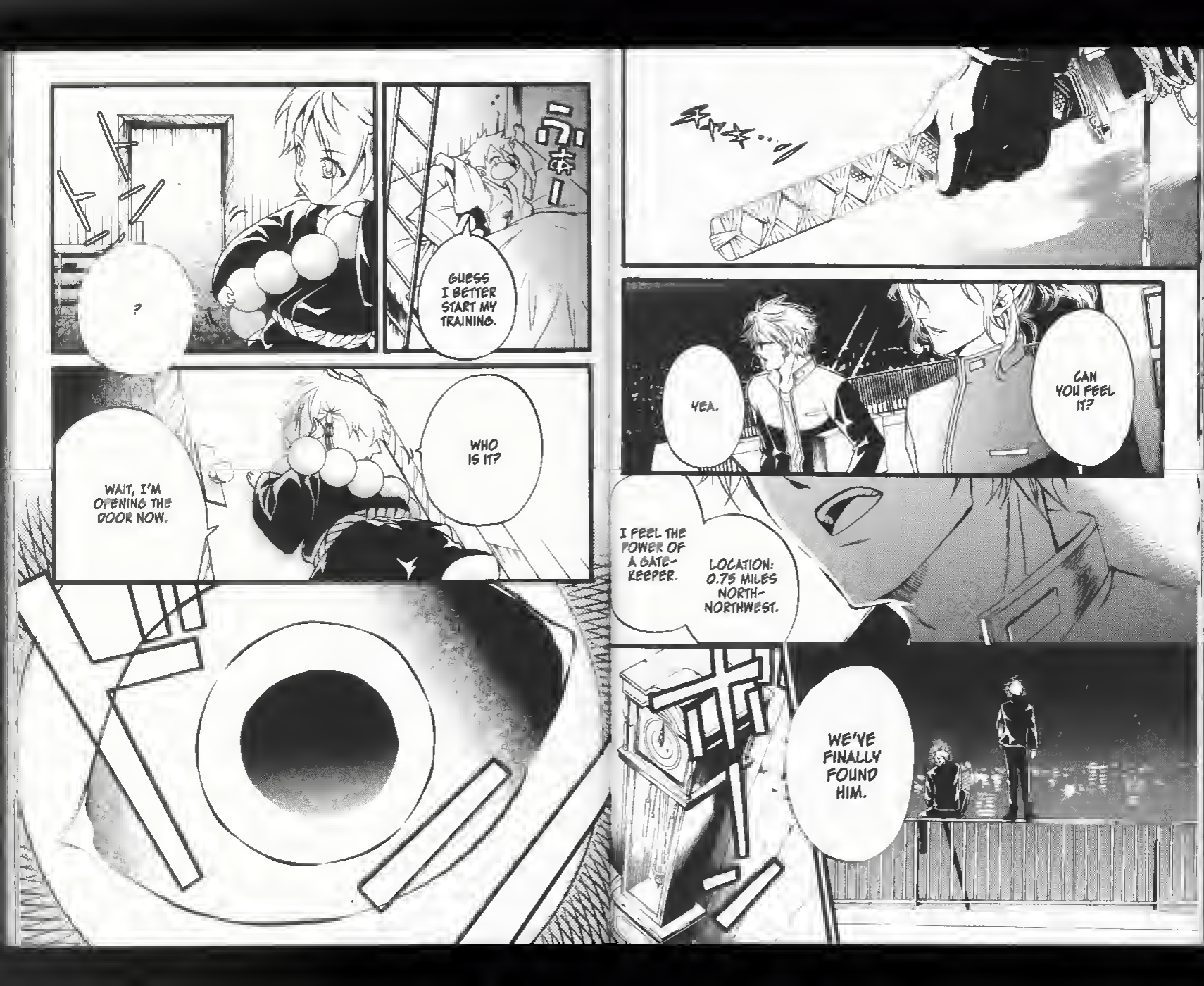
How rude!
MY POINT IS... YOU CAN EARN MONEY BY ASSISTING YOUR FELLOW MITEDAMASHI, EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY POWERS YOURSELF!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, I DON'T HAVE ANY POWERS?

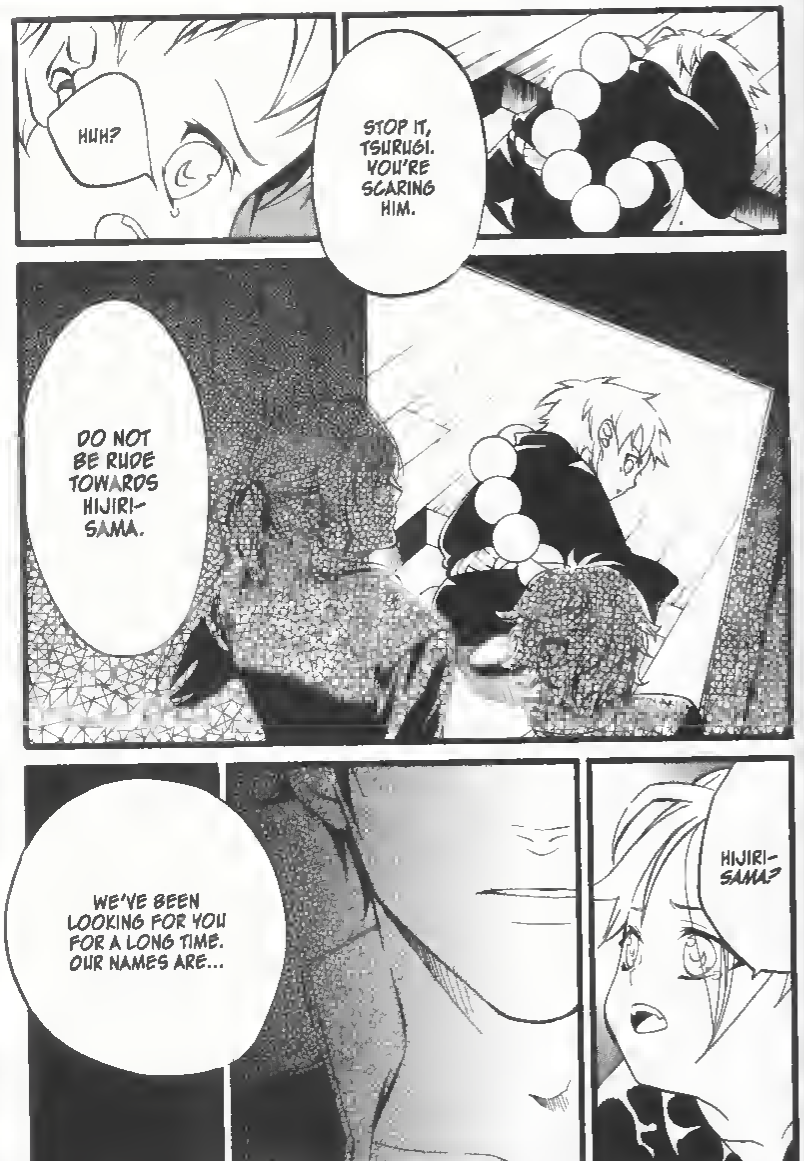
OH?

DON'T MAKE THAT FACE!
HOW WEIRD.
IT'S BEEN SIX YEARS BUT THAT LITTLE GUY LOOKS EXACTLY THE SAME.

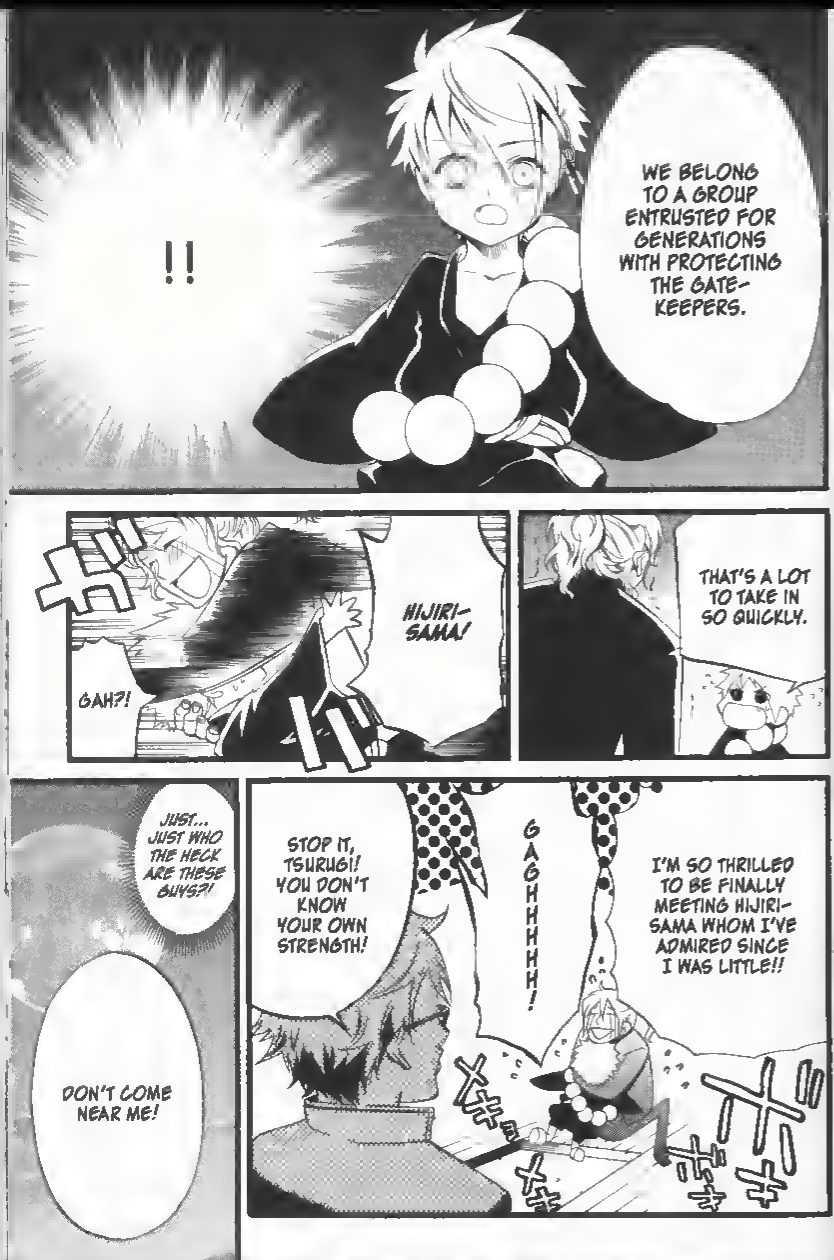
EVERYONE TURNED AWAY FROM ME.
HE LOOKED RIGHT AT ME AND CALLED ME ANNOYING STRAIGHT TO MY FACE!
HMPH! BUT I LIKE HIM.
HUH?! WHAT ABOUT HIM?!
...

"IF YOU WON'T HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY, HOW ABOUT I MAKE SURE YOU'RE NOT AROUND TO SEE TOMORROW?"
YOU.
NO, DON'T!
AHH, ENOUGH ALREADY. THAT'S WHAT YOU GET BEING RAISED BY A MAN WITH NO SOCIAL SKILLS WHATSOEVER!
"IF YOU'RE STILL NOT LISTENING, MAYBE YOU'D LIKE A CHOP TO THE LIVER!!"
Ignore

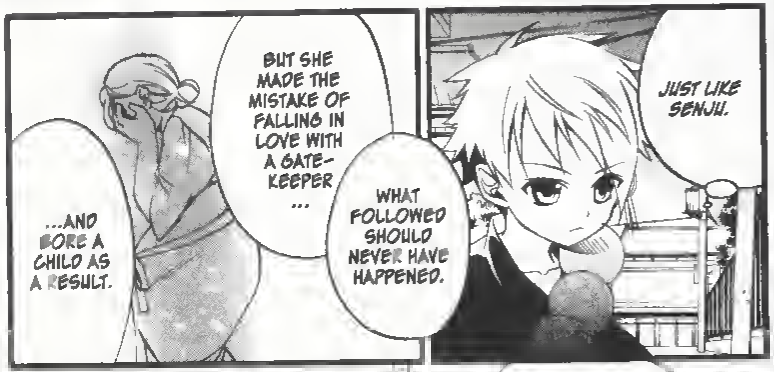

ウォー
GUESS I BETTER START MY TRAINING.
?
WHO IS IT?
WAIT, I'M OPENING THE DOOR NOW.
CAN YOU FEEL IT?
YEA.
I FEEL THE POWER OF A GATE-KEEPER.
LOCATION: 0.75 MILES NORTH-NORTHWEST.
WE'VE FINALLY FOUND HIM.


HUH?
STOP IT, TSUKUGI. YOU'RE SCARING HIM.
DO NOT BE RUDE TOWARDS HIJIRI-SAMA.
WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU FOR A LONG TIME. OUR NAMES ARE...
HIJIRI-SAMA?

HIJIRI... SA...
AH...!
!
JUST, KEEP IT SHUT.
ON SECOND THOUGHT, MAYBE I'D BETTER NOT OPEN THE DOOR!
AAAAAAGH!
THE DOOR!!
CRASH


!!
WE BELONG TO A GROUP ENTRUSTED FOR GENERATIONS WITH PROTECTING THE GATE-KEEPERS.
GAH?!
HIJIRI-SAMA!
THAT'S A LOT TO TAKE IN SO QUICKLY.
JUST... JUST WHO THE HECK ARE THESE GUYS?!
DON'T COME NEAR ME!
STOP IT, TSURUGI! YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR OWN STRENGTH!
GAGHHHHH!
I'M SO THRILLED TO BE FINALLY MEETING HIJIRI-SAMA WHOM I'VE ADMIRED SINCE I WAS LITTLE!!

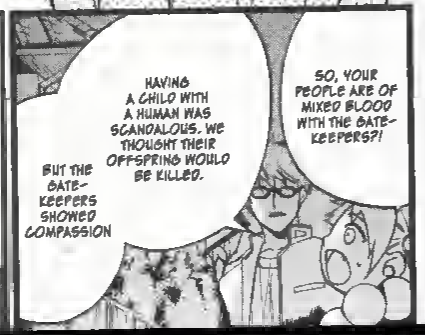
TSURUGI SUGAWARA.
MICHITATE SUGAWARA.

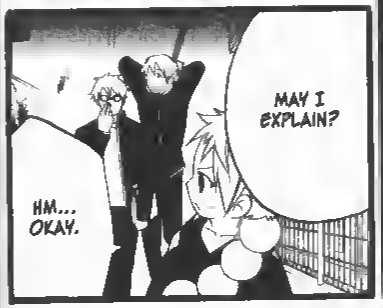

...AND BORE A CHILD AS A RESULT.
BUT SHE MADE THE MISTAKE OF FALLING IN LOVE WITH A GATE-KEEPER ...
WHAT FOLLOWED SHOULD NEVER HAVE HAPPENED.
JUST LIKE SENJU.

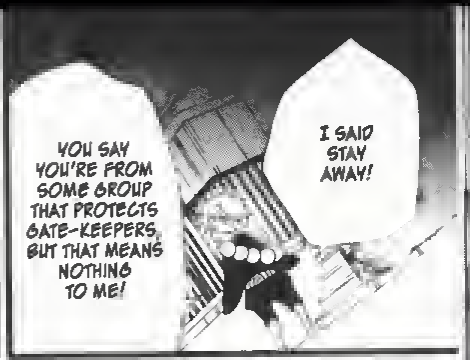
BLINTZES?
I love blintzes I'm starving!
NO. YOU'VE GOT NOTHING BUT FOOD ON THE BRAIN!

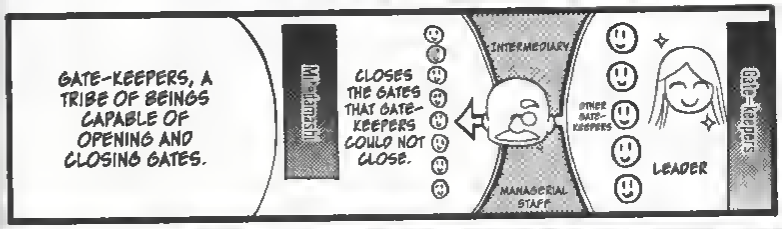
A BLEMISH ON OUR CLAN.

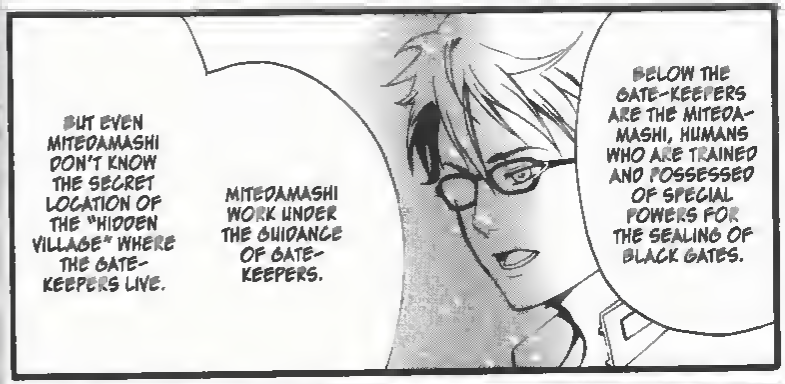
UNDER THE CONDITION THAT OUR PEOPLE WOULD PROTECT THE GATE-KEEPERS FOR ETERNITY.


BUT THE GATE-KEEPERS SHOWED COMPASSION
HAVING A CHILD WITH A HUMAN WAS SCANDALOUS. WE THOUGHT THEIR OFFSPRING WOULD BE KILLED.
SO, YOUR PEOPLE ARE OF MIXED BLOOD WITH THE GATE-KEEPERS?!


HM... OKAY.
MAY I EXPLAIN?


I SAID STAY AWAY!
YOU SAY YOU'RE FROM SOME GROUP THAT PROTECTS GATE-KEEPERS, BUT THAT MEANS NOTHING TO ME!


GATE-KEEPERS, A TRIBE OF BEINGS CAPABLE OF OPENING AND CLOSING GATES.
Mitedamashi
CLOSES THE GATES THAT GATE-KEEPERS COULD NOT CLOSE.
INTERMEDIARY
MANAGERIAL STAFF
OTHER GATE-KEEPERS
LEADER
Gate-Keepers


BELOW THE GATE-KEEPERS ARE THE MITEDA-MASHI, HUMANS WHO ARE TRAINED AND POSSESSED OF SPECIAL POWERS FOR THE SEALING OF BLACK GATES.
MITEDAMASHI WORK UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF GATE-KEEPERS.
BUT EVEN MITEDAMASHI DON'T KNOW THE SECRET LOCATION OF THE "HIDDEN VILLAGE" WHERE THE GATE-KEEPERS LIVE.

BUT A VERY LONG TIME AGO, A FEMALE ANCESTOR OF OUR SUGAWARA CLAN...
...WANDERED INTO THAT HIDDEN VILLAGE.

WE DON'T HAVE THE ABILITY TO CLOSE GATES LIKE GATE-KEEPERS...
...BUT WE HAVE BEEN ENDOWED WITH THE POWER TO PROTECT GATE-KEEPERS.

!
IS...IS THAT SO. I SEE...
AND ALTHOUGH YOUR SIGNAL WAS WEAK WE COULD FEEL ITS PRESENCE. BY HOMING IN ON THAT WE WERE ABLE TO TRACK YOU DOWN.
SINCE ACCEPTING OUR DUTY AS GUARDIANS WE HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU, THE ONE WORTHY OF BEING THE LEADER OF THE GATE-KEEPERS.
!!
I FELT IT! A GATE!
IT'S ABOUT MID-SIZED. IF WE DON'T TAKE CARE OF IT PROMPTLY, SOMEONE COULD GET HURT.
BARK
BARK
BARK
!!
THIS IS NOT GOOD! THEY'RE GOING CRAZY FROM THE GATE'S PRESENCE!
PLEASE STAND BACK.

TSURUGI OF THE "BLADE!!"
MICHITATE OF THE "SHIELD."
HNGH!

PLEASE QUICKLY CLOSE THAT GATE!
THIS IS AS MUCH AS WE CAN DO, HIJIRI-SAMA!
O-OKAY.
I...
I DECIDED TO BECOME STRONGER ON MY OWN! I DON'T WANT HELP FROM ANYONE!
BUT...
I CAN'T EVEN CLOSE A SMALL ONE. CAN I DO THIS?
ABOUT MID-SIZE, HUH?
GATE BE SEALED!
ONE. PATH OF THE LITTLE ONES.
HM?

THE PAGES OF THE BOOK PROTECTED ME!
AND THAT OTHER GUY MAY BE SKINNY, BUT HE'S GOT SUPER STRENGTH. HE HANDLED THAT LONG SWORD LIKE IT WAS A FEATHER!
THESE ARE... GUARDIANS TO THE GATE-KEEPERS!

HEY, WON'T YOU PARTNER UP WITH ME?
WE'D BE MUCH BETTER AS A TEAM THAN INDIVIDUALLY
WHAT'S WITH THE ATTITUDE ALL THE TIME?

.....

WHAT'S UP WITH YOU, MICHIZANE?
TH-THIS GUY'S...WAY TOO COLD.

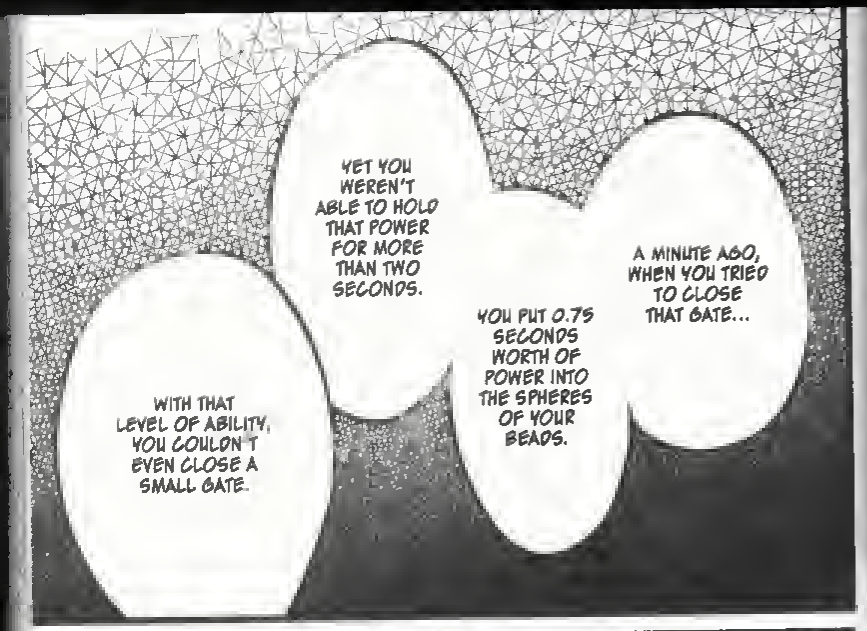
WH-WHO'S THERE?
WHO CLOSED THE GATE?!

"SIO ANNOYING ME."
HIM!

BRAT, EH? YOU'RE EVEN SMALLER THAN ME!
YOU! YOU'RE THAT RUDE BRAT!
!

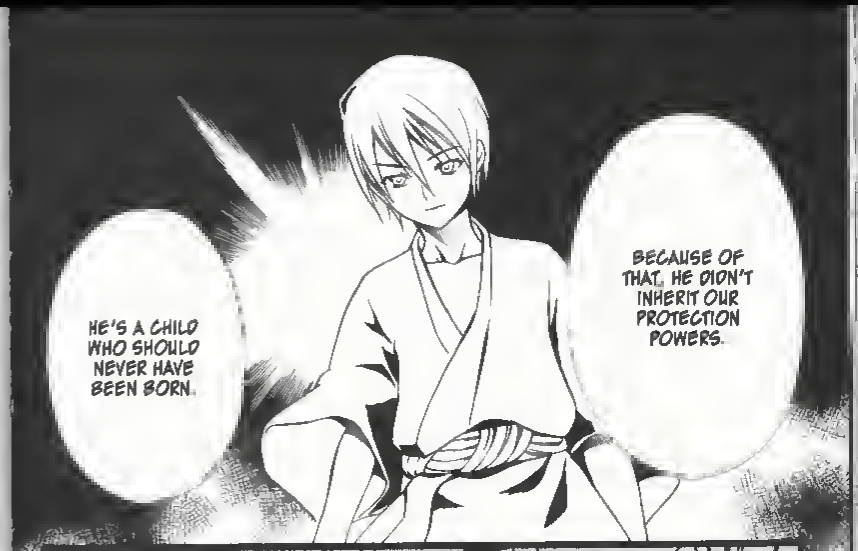
LONG TIME NO SEE, MICHIZANE
DON'T TOUCH ME.
LITTLE BROTHER?!
DON'T GET COCKY. IT'S SHAMEFUL.
HIJIRI-SAMA, YOU'D BE BETTER OFF NOT PARTNERING UP WITH HIM.
MY FATHER SPAWNED THAT CHILD IN A UNION OUTSIDE OUR FAMILY...AND OUR CLAN.

MY FOOLISH LITTLE BROTHER ISN'T WELL MANNERED.
MY APOLOGIES, HIJIRI-SAMA.


YET YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO HOLD THAT POWER FOR MORE THAN TWO SECONDS.
A MINUTE AGO, WHEN YOU TRIED TO CLOSE THAT GATE...
YOU PUT 0.75 SECONDS WORTH OF POWER INTO THE SPHERES OF YOUR BEADS.
WITH THAT LEVEL OF ABILITY, YOU COULDN'T EVEN CLOSE A SMALL GATE.

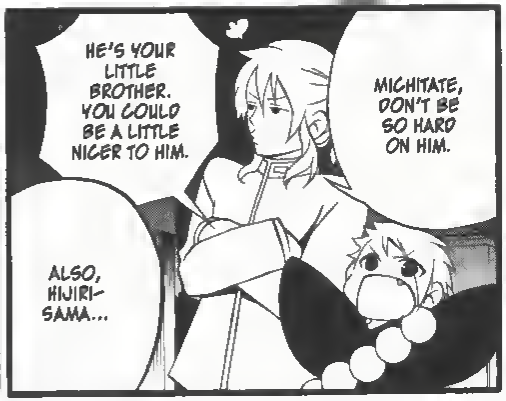
I'LL PROTECT YOU, BUT PLEASE UNDERSTAND I'M RISKING MY LIFE FOR AN INCOMPETENT GATE-KEEPER.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO TALK BIG, YOU OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO CLOSE A GATE.
MY GUESS IS YOU'VE BEEN SPOILED.


HE'S A CHILD WHO SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN BORN.
BECAUSE OF THAT, HE DIDN'T INHERIT OUR PROTECTION POWERS.

CURSED.

THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEED TO KNOW.


HE'S YOUR LITTLE BROTHER. YOU COULD BE A LITTLE NICER TO HIM.
MICHITATE, DON'T BE SO HARD ON HIM.
ALSO, HIJIRI-SAMA...

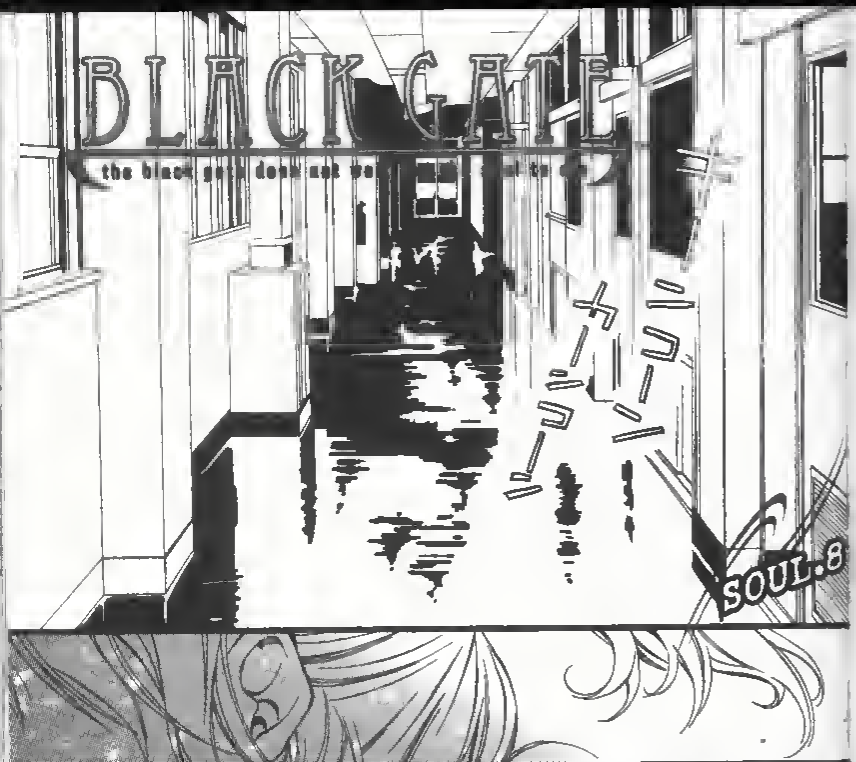
CHARACTER PROFILE:01

HIJIRI

■HIJIRI■

AGE: 18 YEARS OLD (AS OF VOLUME 2)
HEIGHT: 130 CM
BLOOD TYPE: UNKNOWN
BIRTHDATE: UNKNOWN

THE PROTAGONIST OF THIS CHAPTER. HE IS THE SON OF THE LATE YOSHITSUNA, THE LEADER OF THE GATE-KEEPERS. HE HAS INHERITED HIS FATHER'S POWERS, BUT HE HIMSELF IS A FAILURE. HE HAS A BOLD ATTITUDE, BUT HIS NATURE IS BASICALLY THAT OF A BULLIED CHILD. UNTIL SIX YEARS AGO, HE WAS TEASED AND MADE FUN OF DAILY BY SENJU. AS A RESULT, HE'S GROWN UP TO BE PRETTY CHICKEN-HEARTED. FOR UNKNOWN REASONS, HIS PHYSICAL APPEARANCE HASN'T CHANGED IN THE PAST SIX YEARS (THOUGH, ACTUALLY, EVEN LONGER). BUT HE ISN'T TOO CONCERNED ABOUT THAT SINCE HE CAN SPEAK WITH ANIMALS, HE HAS MANY ANIMAL FRIENDS. HIS FAVORITE FOOD IS FRIED TOFU. HE BELIEVES THE REASON THAT SENJU SUDDENLY LEFT HIM IS BECAUSE HE HIMSELF IS WORTHLESS. SO HE BECAME DEVOTED TO IMPROVING HIMSELF BY TRAINING DAY AND NIGHT. UNFORTUNATELY, HIS EFFORTS HAVE THUS FAR BEEN IN VAIN.



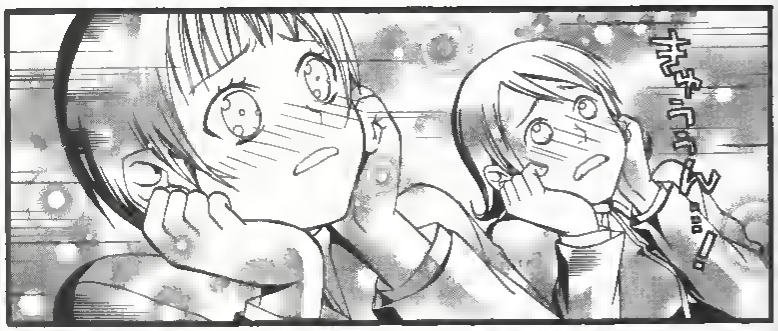
TSU-
TSURUGI-KUN.
BUT..
TO GUARD HIJIRI SAMA, WHO IS TRAINING IN TOKYO, TO BE A GATE-KEEPER
WE DID THIS
IN FEBRUARY, MICHITATE, AND MYSELF, TSURUGI, TRANSFERRED TO A HIGH SCHOOL IN TOKYO

■SENJU■

AGE: 29 YEARS OLD (AS OF VOLUME 2)/HEIGHT: 178 CM/BLOOD TYPE: AB/ BIRTHDATE: JANUARY 3RD

BORN IN TOKYO, HE RAISED HIJIRI AFTER HIS REAL PARENTS DIED. HE IS A TWISTED, SELFISH, OVERBEARING HUMAN FULL OF PERSONALITY FAULTS. AS A MITEGAMASHI, HOWEVER, HE POSSESSES CONSIDERABLE TALENT.
FOR THE MOST PART, HE'S NEVER HAD MANY FRIENDS, AND, ON HIS DAYS OFF, HE SPENDS HIS DAYS LARGELY AT HOME. IN THIS REGARD, HIJIRI CALLS HIM A "GLOOMY SHUT-IN." BUT HE DEFENDS HIS STAY-AT-HOME LIFESTYLE, SAYING, "I DON'T HAVE MONEY TO HANG OUT ANYWHERE ELSE."
AT AGE 10, HE WANDERED INTO THE GATE-KEEPERS' HIDDEN VILLAGE, AND FROM THEN UNTIL THE "TRAGIC INCIDENT" OCCURRED, HE LIVED WITH YOSHITSUNA AND HIS CLAN.
THE NAME "SENJU" WAS GIVEN TO HIM BY YOSHITSUNA TO MEAN, "HE WHO CAN CAST OFF HIS PREVIOUS SELF AND HAS A THOUSAND WAYS TO LIVE." HIS BIOLOGICAL PARENTS ALSO GAVE HIM A NAME.
HE RESPECTS YOSHITSUNA, AND, THOUGH THEY ARE UNRELATED, HE HAS GREAT AFFECTION FOR YOSHITSUNA'S SON, HIJIRI.
HE IS A BUSINESSMAN (THOUGH WITH NO BUSINESS SKILLS) WHO, IN HARD TIMES, IS KNOWN TO LIVE ON BEEF BOWLS.
HIS WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN SINCE HE LEFT HIJIRI AND VANISHED.

CHARACTER PROFILE:02
SENJU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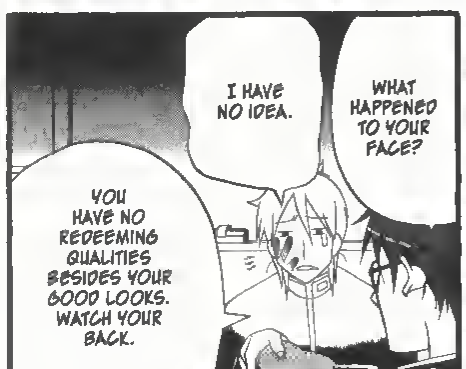
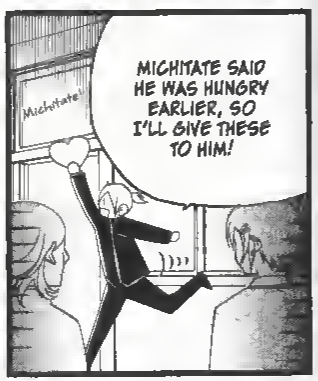
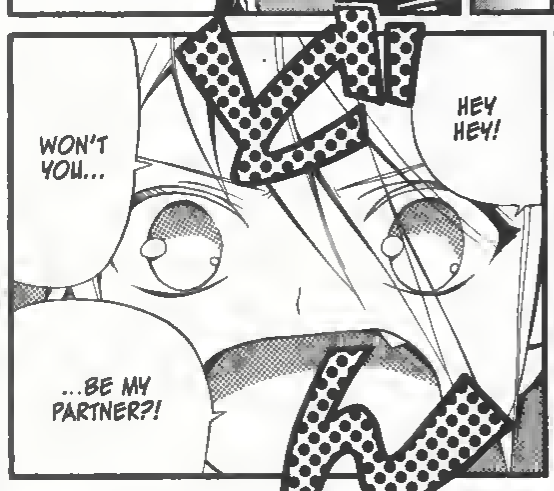
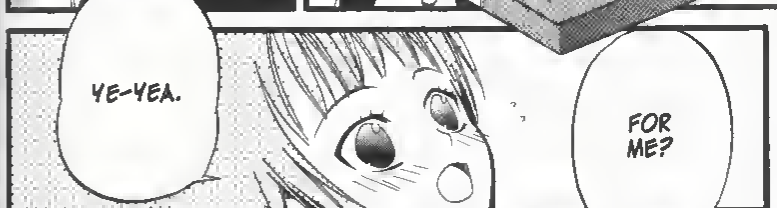

I HAVE NO IDEA.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR FACE?
YOU HAVE NO REDEEMING QUALITIES BESIDES YOUR GOOD LOOKS. WATCH YOUR BACK.


MICHITATE SAID HE WAS HUNGRY EARLIER, SO I'LL GIVE THESE TO HIM!
Michitate


HEY HEY!
WON'T YOU...
...BE MY PARTNER?!

MEANWHILE, AT HAZAMA'S BAR
ｸﾞﾃｯ

PLEASE TAKE THIS CHOCOLATE!
GO ON! PLEASE!

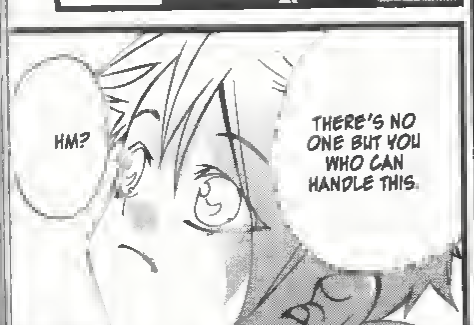

YE-YEA.
FOR ME?

I'M HAPPY.
THANKS, SASAKI.

IF YOU CAN CLOSE EVEN ONE GATE, I'LL JOIN UP WITH YOU AND BE YOUR PARTNER.
BUT I DOUBT YOU CAN DO IT. IT'D BE TOO MUCH FOR SOMEONE WHO NEEDS OTHERS DOING ALL THE HARD WORK FOR HIM.

HEY, OLD MAN.
I'VE GOT A JOB REQUEST.

W-WHAT ARE YOU SO TESTY ABOUT?
HIJIRI-KUN!


HM?
THERE'S NO ONE BUT YOU WHO CAN HANDLE THIS.

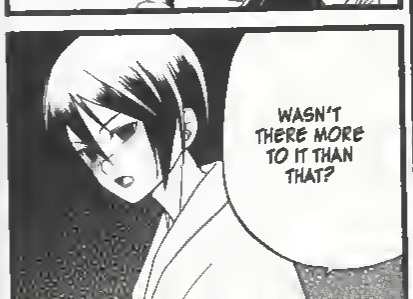
I'm begging you!
ISN'T THERE SOMETHING I COULD DO?
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU I'M NOT INTERESTED.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO TALK BIG, YOU OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO CLOSE A GATE.
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO PATHETIC?

PERSIS-TENT, AREN'T YOU?

むかっ

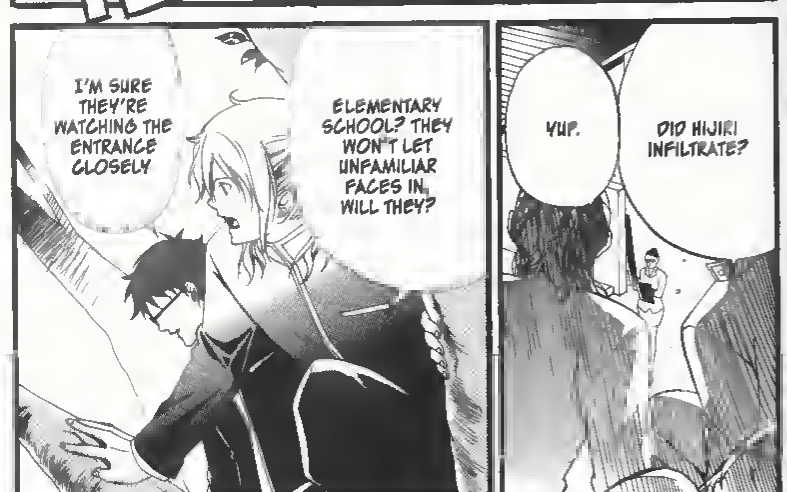
HUH?


WASN'T THERE MORE TO IT THAN THAT?

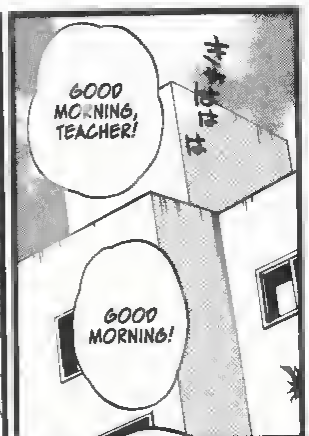
I WANT YOUR BROTHER TO RECONSIDER WHAT HE SAID TO ME!!
REGARD-LESS, TOGETHER WE CAN CLOSE GATES!

I GUESS THERE'S NO WAY AROUND IT. I'LL INVESTIGATE AND SEE IF THERE'S A GATE HERE OR NOT.
YOU!
HASN'T CLASS ALREADY BEGUN? WHERE'S YOUR CLASS?!

BEEEE! AN UNEXPECTED ENEMY HAS APPEARED!
HEY HEY! WHAT'S YOUR NAME AND GRADE?!


DID HIJIRI INFILTRATE?
YUP.
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL? THEY WON'T LET UNFAMILIAR FACES IN, WILL THEY?
I'M SURE THEY'RE WATCHING THE ENTRANCE CLOSELY

GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE!
AS YOUR TEACHER, I'LL BE SURE TO LOOK OUT FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY!
GOOD MORNING!
HM?


GOOD MORNING, TEACHER!
GOOO MORNING!

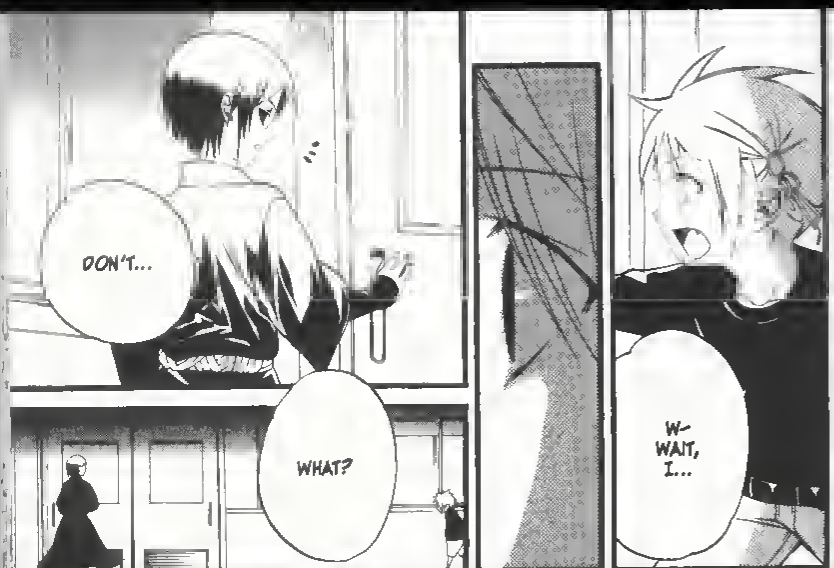
I HAVEN'T SEEN THIS CHILD BEFORE. PERHAPS A TRANSFER STUDENT?

I HEAR THAT STUDENTS AT A LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HAVE BEEN GETTING DRAGGED INTO THE POOL AND DROWNING. OTHERS ARE FALLING OUT OF WINDOWS, AND THERE HAVE BEEN MANY INJURIES. TAKE A LOOK AROUND THERE, WILL YOU? MY HUNCH TELLS ME IT'S NOT A GATE DOING THIS, THOUGH...
HAVING ME INFILTRATE AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO SEE IF THERE'S A GATE HERE!
Ruler
JEEZ, THAT OLD GEEZER!

"I GOT TO FEELING NOSTALGIC AS I WALKED BY."
"WOULD IT BE ALL RIGHT, MADAM?"
YOU DON'T CARE, DO YOU, TEACH? I MEAN...
OH MY! A HANDSOME LAD!
HUH?!
DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING THAT CAN PROVE YOU'RE A GRADUATE?!
"SO, THE TEACHERS SURE HAVE GOTTEN MORE BEAUTIFUL SINCE I WAS A STUDENT HERE."
Y'KNOW
EEE-EEEK!
"I WASN'T AWARE OF THAT."
IF YOU DON'T, YOU CAN'T COME IN!
BUT IF THERE IS A GATE, IT'S A DEADLY ONE. WE'VE GOT TO HURRY AND CLOSE IN.
HUH?
LET'S MAKE USE OF YOUR SOLE REDEEMING QUALITY.
HM?
"I'M A FORMER STUDENT OF THIS SCHOOL. IS IT OKAY TO COME IN?"
"ARE YOU A TEACHER HERE, MISS?"
SINCE THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY HERE LATELY, I'D BETTER BE ON THE LOOKOUT.
I WILL PROTECT THIS SCHOOL!

*In quotes because these are lines given to Tsurugi by Michitate

?? SHE PASSED OUT FOR SOME REASON.
?
HEY, YOU LEFT OUT A LINE.
NO MATTER, SHALL WE PROCEED?
WHAT A FEARSOME MAN.
THERE WAS A JOB AT AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, BUT I GAVE IT TO SOMEONE ELSE.
Sorry.
HEEEY, OLD MAN! ANY JOBS COME IN?
THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A GIANT GATE THERE.
WHA--?
AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL?
YUP.
HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE CHECKING OUT THE LOCATION TO SEE IF THERE'S A GATE THERE.
YOU DROPPED THIS PAPER.
IT'S SAYS THERE'S A MASSIVE LEVEL 4 GATE CONFIRMED TO BE THERE.
THAT'S PRETTY DANGEROUS.
THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING.
HIJIRI-KUN!


DON'T...
WHAT?
W-WAIT, I...

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
MY SENSES ARE GIVING OFF WARNINGS.

STOP!
DO NOT OPEN THAT DOOR.
I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.

YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY SENSE.

HM?
ALL RIGHT... LET'S LOOK INTO THIS GATE BUSINESS.

Finally lost them
THAT TEACH DOESN'T GIVE UP SO EASILY.

AH.

DID YOU THINK OVER OUR BEING PARTNERS?
I SAID YOU ANNOY ME.

I'M OUT.
WAIT UP!

WASN'T HARD. THE TEACHER WATCHING THE SCHOOL ENTRANCE FAINTED FOR WHATEVER REASON.
YOU SHOWED UP TOO, HUH?!
I MEAN... OH NO, YOU AGAIN?

AAAAAAGH!
MICHIZANE!!
WAIT! MICHIZANE GOT KNOCKED OUT! WE'VE GOT TO SAVE HIM!
YOU CAN'T!
WHOA! THAT GATE IS INSANE!
THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN CLOSE THAT GATE WITH YOUR SKILLS. LET'S GET OUT OF HERE, HIJIRI-SAMA!
HIJIRI-SAMA!
GUYS!

I'VE GOT TO CLOSE IT!
W-WHAT IS GOING ON?!

HEY, YOU...
HIJIRI-SAMA, DON'T DO IT. IT'S DANGEROUS.
I'LL GO!
AS COUSIN TO BOTH OF YOU, I REALLY CAN'T GO ALONG WITH YOUR FEELINGS.
MICHI-TATE.
I LOVE BOTH YOU AND MICHIZANE.

A GATE OF THAT SIZE, IF NOT DISPATCHED PROPERLY, COULD COST YOU YOUR LIFE.
THE CLOSER YOU GO TO THE GATE, THE GREATER ITS POWERS BECOME.
DON'T MOVE A STEP CLOSER.
WHAT?!
WE CAN'T RISK OUR LIVES FOR HIM ALONE.
WHY WOULON'T YOU--?
BUT HE'S... YOUR LITTLE BROTHER!

ONE. PATH OF THE LITTLE ONES.
CRAP.
NO TURNING BACK NOW!
ONE. PATH OF THE LITTLE ONES.
ONE. PATH OF THE LITTLE ONES.
TWO.
AGH!
THAT WAS DANGER-OUS!
IT'S TOO RISKY!
...CAN DO SOMETHING!
EVEN I...
IS THERE NOTHING THAT I CAN DO?

I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT ME HERE.
...THE MAN WHO RAISED ME.
WITH YOUR WORDS, YOU INSULTED...
...BUT THAT WAS MY DOING.
SURE, I MAY BE SPOILED AND EVEN STUPID...

YOU CAN'T EVEN CLOSE A SMALL GATE...
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO DO NOW?
I HOPE THAT YOU WON'T DISAPPOINT ME ANY FURTHER.
ON TOP OF BEING SPOILED, YOU CAN'T JUDGE SITUATIONS.
DON'T PUT DOWN PEOPLE SO MUCH!
"MY GUESS IS YOU'VE BEEN SPOILED."
YOU SAID IT YOURSELF.
I'M ALSO STUPID.
FINE! I WAS SPOILED!

ONE. PATH OF THE...
AGAIN!
ONCE MORE.
ONE MORE TIME!
YOU'RE TOO CLOSE!
DON'T DO IT, HIJIRI-SAMA!
I'LL SHOW YOU...
...THE SPIRIT THAT SENJU BEAT INTO ME!
HIJIRI-SAMA?!
ONE. PATH OF THE LITTLE ONES.
IF I GET CLOSER TO THE GATE, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO DIRECT POWER INTO IT!

GATE...
...BE SEALED!

JEEZ.
WHAT A TROUBLESOME FELLOW.

WE NOW RECOGNIZE YOU AS THE TRUE MASTER.
WE DECLARE OUR ALLEGIANCE TO YOU.

SENJU.
YOU SHOULD SEE THIS.
HA HA.
HA HA HA.
HA.
WE TAKE BACK ALL THAT STUFF ABOUT YOU BEING "SPOILED" TOO.

Phew
UGH...
YOU!
PLEASE DO NOT SLOUCH.
!
TSK"L,
TSURUGI.
YEAH?
"THE MASTER" SHOULDN'T LOOK SO PATHETIC.
WHAT...

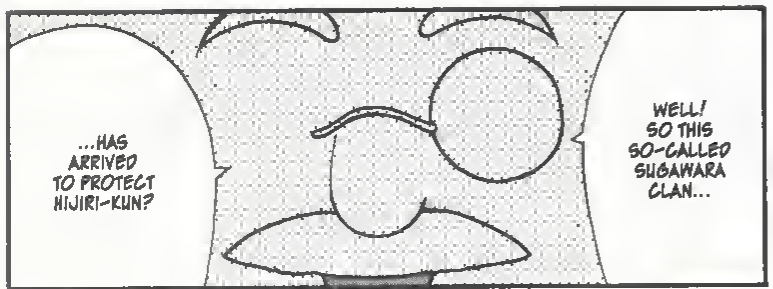
AGHHHHH!
DON'T SCREAM. IT'S PATHETIC.
ARE ALL MITEDAMASHI THESE DAYS SUCH COWARDS?

Huff
Huff
Huff
Huff
HE-
HE-
HELP!

I MADE FRIENDS ON MY OWN.

BLACK GATE
SOUL.9

I'M GOING TO TELL EVERYONE...
...THAT MITEDAMASHI THESE DAYS ARE NOTHING BUT COWARDS.



*Monaka is red bean jam sandwiched between two thin wafers made from mochi

THEY'RE COMING HERE NOW.
A TOKEN OF MY FRIEND-SHIP -- MONAKA!
YOU'RE AN ODD SORT, AREN'T YOU?
OH, NO, THE ONE WITH THE GLASSES IS ACTUALLY PRETTY SERI--

ARE YOU AFRAID? BECAUSE YOU KNOW I'LL BE MORE USEFUL TO HIM THAN YOU WILL.
I DON'T THINK HE'S WORTHY ENOUGH TO BE YOUR PARTNER BUT...
THAT'S FUNNY. I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU PROVE THAT THEORY.
AFRAID?
HM?
They're still brothers after all!
HEY HEY! WHY ARE THINGS SO BAD BETWEEN THEM?
MOOD? WHAT MOOD?
TSURUGI, DO SOMETHING TO CHEER UP THE MOOD, WILL YOU?
WHY DON'T YOU ASK THEM YOURSELF?
YOU AIRHEAD!

WHY IS THAT PERSON HERE?
LET'S NOT WORRY ABOUT THAT, HIJIRI-SAMA.
EARLIER —
IF YOU CAN CLOSE EVEN ONE GATE, I'LL JOIN UP WITH YOU AND BE YOUR PARTNER.
HE MADE ME A DEAL!
I DON'T RECALL SAYING IT SO NICELY!
HE'S MY PARTNER!
IT'S NOT LIKE I'M ENJOYING THIS MEAL.

I'M DOING MY HOMEWORK! GET OUT OF HERE!
HIJIRI'S REALLY BUMMED OUT OVER YOU BROTHERS ALWAYS FIGHTING
TSURUGI?
THERE'S A REASON YOU CHOSE MICHIZANE FOR A PARTNER, RIGHT?
MM
GO AHEAD AND ASK YOURSELF.
THE REASON I CHOSE HIM?
I'M NOME.
TSU-CHAN?
MI-CHAN, WELCOME BACK!
TSU-CHAN'S HERE.
WHAT'S FOR DINNER, GRANDMA?
YO!
YOU JUST WANTED TO BARGE IN AND BUG ME, THAT'S ALL.
I SEE WE'VE GOTTEN TO OUR REBELLIOUS PHASE! SHEESH, SEEMS LIKE YESTERDAY I WAS CHANGING YOUR DIAPERS!
DORK!
Comforter
W-WHAT.
MICHIZANE...

I COULDN'T COME UP WITH A REASON.
YOU SURE AREN'T SOMEONE I'D WANT TO BE PARTNERS WITH.
I was like, "Huh? What's the reason?"
I THOUGHT ALL NIGHT ABOUT WHY I WANTED MICHIZANE TO BE MY PARTNER... AND...
NO, A REASON DID HIT ME. I JUST CAN'T REMEMBER IT.
I WILL SAY...
WHILE I THOUGHT ABOUT THEM, IT OCCURRED TO ME.
...THAT IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE HORRIBLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THOSE BROTHERS!
WHAT?!
WHY NOT MAKE A MISSION OUT OF IT? WHY NOT REPAIR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THOSE TWO?!

MICHIZANE, I SMELL FOOD.
Campus
TELL YOU WHAT. DO MY HOMEWORK FOR ME.
NO SUCH THING AS A FREE MEAL, AFTER ALL.
.....
THE REASON I CHOSE MICHIZANE TO BE MY PARTNER?
SO...
WHAT COULD IT BE?
WE'VE GOT A MISSION, TSURUGI!
WHA?

MISSION 2
MICHITATE! MICHIZANE'S BEEN HURT!
(A lie)
はいはーい!

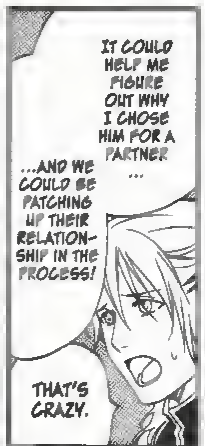
IT WENT ON LIKE THAT FOR AN HOUR.
THIS IS PAINFUL. I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.
HUH? YOU GOTTA GO TO THE BATHROOM THAT BAD?
YOU REALLY ARE AN IDIOT!

IS HE DEAD?

MISSION 3
LET'S GO, YOU GUYS!
THEY'LL SET ASIDE THEIR DIFFERENCES IF THEY WORK TOGETHER!

UH, NO.
Whatever
He's alive

NO, NOT CRAZY.
YEAH!


IT COULD HELP ME FIGURE OUT WHY I CHOSE HIM FOR A PARTNER ...
...AND WE COULD BE PATCHING UP THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN THE PROCESS!
THAT'S CRAZY.

LET'S GO!
RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

IF THEY COULD JUST STRIKE UP A CONVERSATION.
HE SHOWED UP!

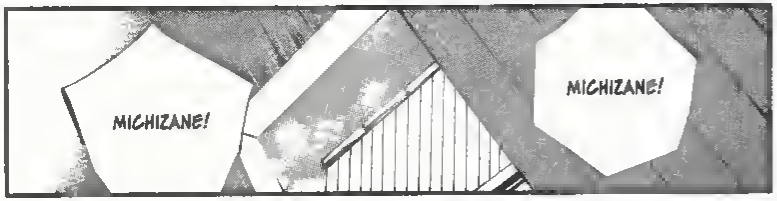
MISSION 1
FIX IT SO TWO PEOPLE RUN INTO EACH OTHER AT THE SAME TEASHOP! IT'S CALLED "THE FOUR PERSON MEETING."
YEAH!

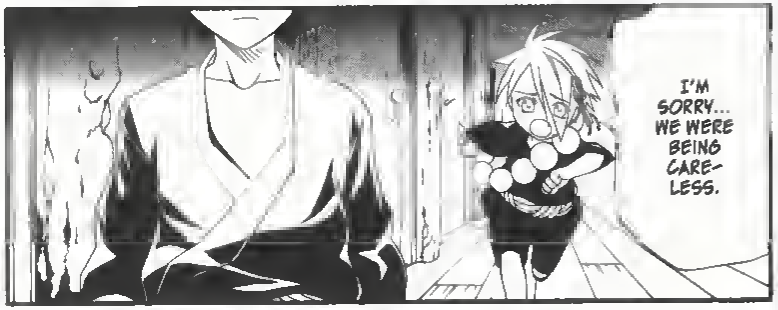
HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE HE LEFT HOME?
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO MEET HIM LIKE THIS.
TSURUGI AND THE OTHERS... THEY WERE PLANNING SOMETHING.
I'M HOME.
MOM?
I'm a book store
AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
70m
*230 A
Playing a game
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
30m
*98 A
30 cm
Tsurugi got stuck and tripped on a drain
AND WHAT ABOUT YOU?!
*7 A
ENOUGH ALREADY!
I'VE HAD IT WITH THESE GUYS.
DAMN. CRAP, I DIED.
THANKS FOR WAITING. I DECIDED TO BUY THIS BOOK.
DOES YOUR CLAN KNOW THE MEANING OF COOPERATION?

WHAT'S OUR NEXT STEP?
UHHH...
WOULD YOU MIND NOT INTERFERING IN MY AFFAIRS?
SORRY TO DISAPPOINT, BUT I NEVER INTEND TO GET ALONG WITH MICHIZANE
TO SUM UP HOW I FEEL ABOUT HIM...
"IT WOULD BE FAR BETTER..."

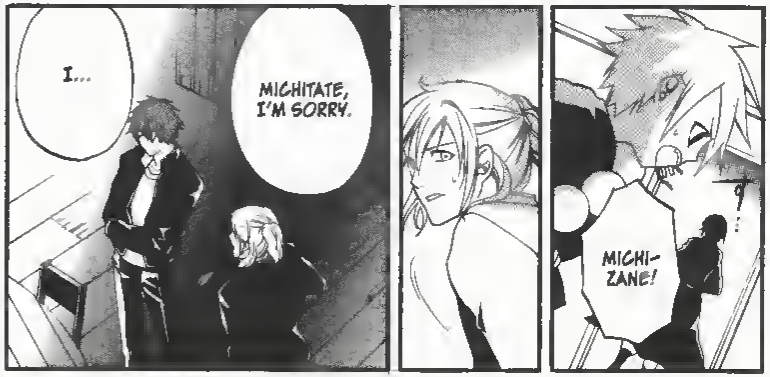
MOM?!
WHAT HAPPENED?
I HAD A DREAM THAT YOU WERE GONE.
YOUR FATHER BETRAYED ME, AND EVEN YOU...
UGH... AAGH
IT'S ALL RIGHT. TAKE A DEEP BREATH.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
AGHHH.

I'D APPRE-CIATE IT.
JUST STAY OUT OF MY BUSINESS.
MICHITATE?


MICHIZANE!
MICHIZANE!


I'M SORRY... WE WERE BEING CARE-LESS.

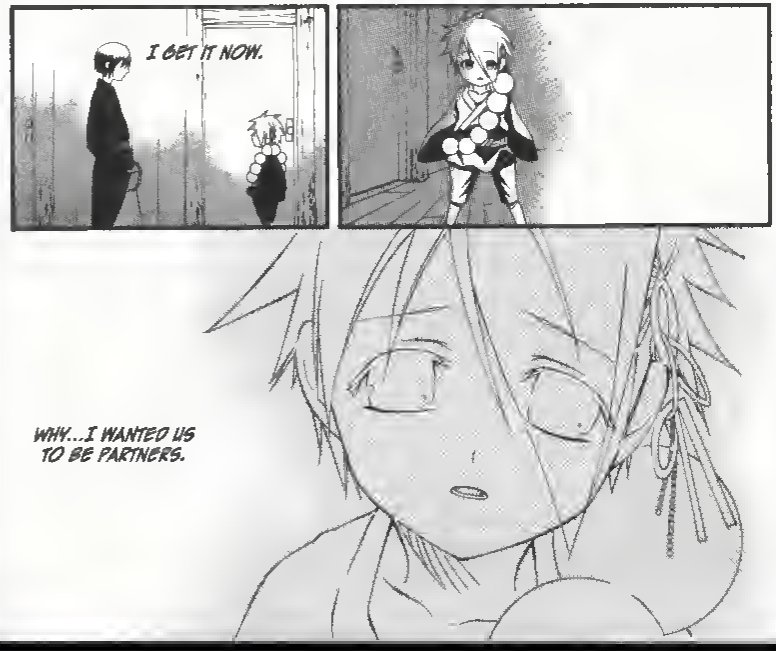
"IT WOULD BE FAR BETTER IF HE WAS NEVER BORN."


I...
MICHITATE, I'M SORRY.
MICHI-ZANE!

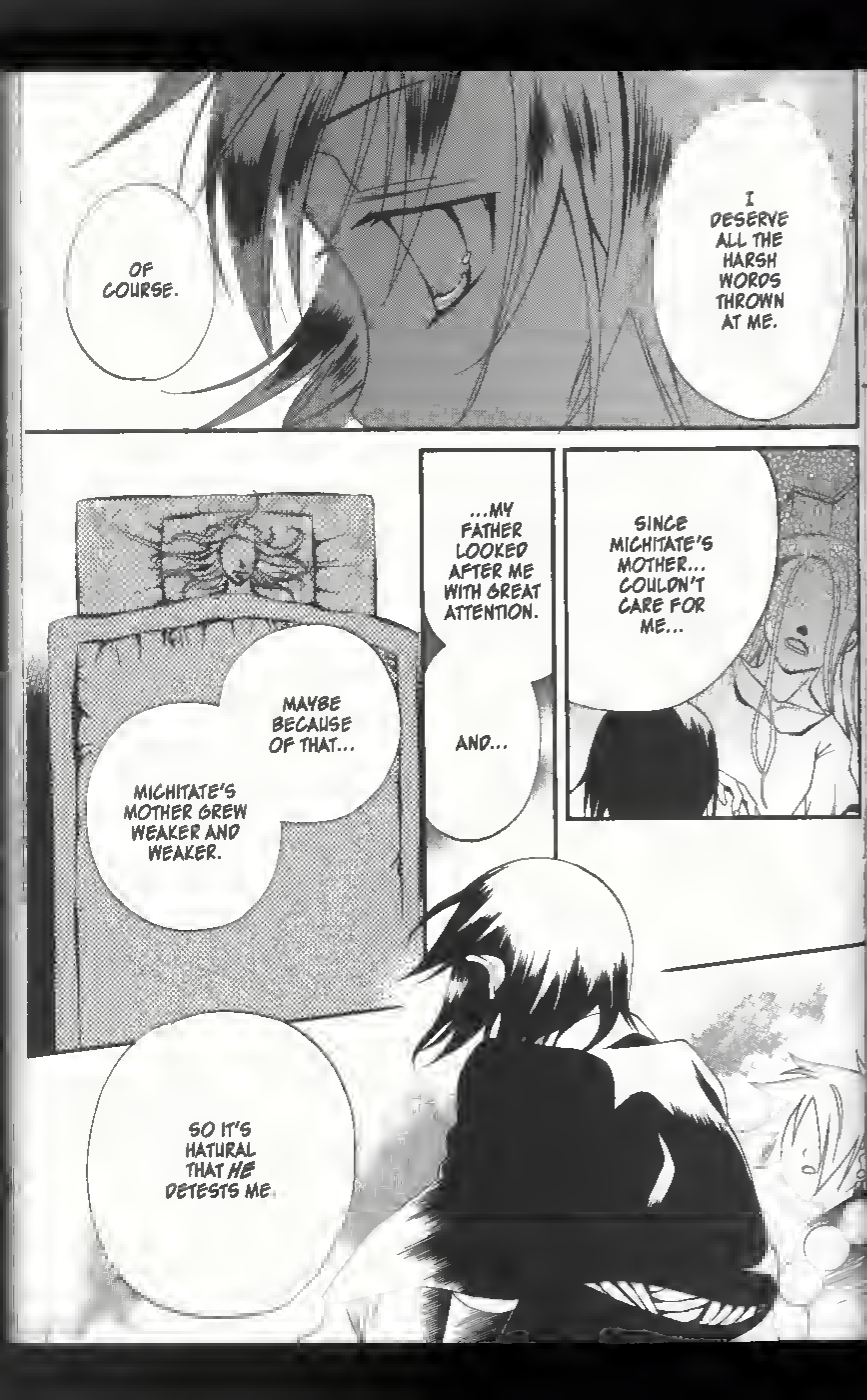
ARE YOU REALLY YOSHI-TSUNA'S SON?
HUH?
IS IT EASIER... TO HAVE NO EXPECTA-TIONS?
YEAH?

IF ANYTHING EVER HAPPENED TO YOU, IT WOULD SHAME THE MEMORY OF YOSHITSUNA.
IS IT EASIER...
...TO LOCK IN YOUR FEELINGS SO THAT YOU WON'T GET HURT?
IT'S TOUGH.
SO I PUT UP A WALL AND HID BEHIND IT.
I COULDN'T STAND NOT BEING NEEDED.
I WAS LIKE THAT TOO ONCE.
YOU HAVE THE SAME EYES.

H?
ABOUT WHAT?
THERE'S NOTHING TO APOLOGIZE FOR.
?


I GET IT NOW.
WHY...I WANTED US TO BE PARTNERS.

BOTTLING UP YOUR FEELINGS.
IT'S TOUGH, ISN'T IT?
IF YOU FEEL INSULTED, IT'S OKAY!
IT'S SO SHAMEFUL TO HAVE ANYONE FEELING SORRY FOR ME.
IT'S OKAY TO PUT ON A TOUGH FACE!
THE PEACE GAINED FROM GIVING UP IS FALSE!
I...
I CHOSE YOU TO BE MY PARTNER BECAUSE I WANTED TO SAVE...
..."THE OLD ME."

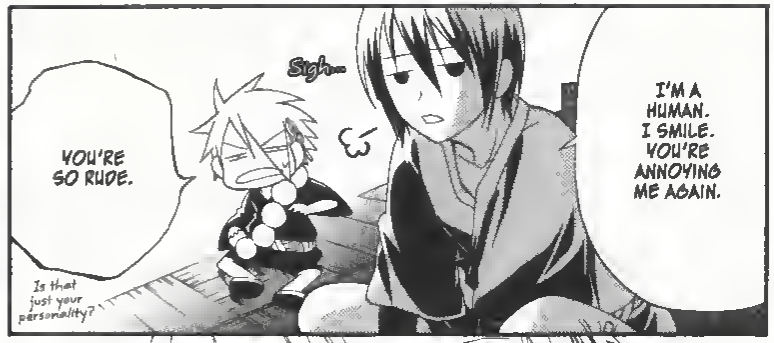

OF COURSE.
I DESERVE ALL THE HARSH WORDS THROWN AT ME.
MAYBE BECAUSE OF THAT...
MICHITATE'S MOTHER GREW WEAKER AND WEAKER.
...MY FATHER LOOKED AFTER ME WITH GREAT ATTENTION.
AND...
SINCE MICHITATE'S MOTHER... COULDN'T CARE FOR ME...
SO IT'S NATURAL THAT HE DETESTS ME.

...WHAT'S THE STORY... BEHIND WHY THERE'S A RIFT BETWEEN YOU?
THE TWO OF YOU...
WON'T YOU TELL ME?
I DON'T KNOW WHO MY MOTHER IS.
FROM MY FATHER, I INHERITED THE LINEAGE OF A GATE-KEEPER GUARDIAN, BUT...
..FOR SOME REASON, I DIDN'T INHERIT HIS POWER.
AS YOU KNOW... I WAS THE PRODUCT OF OUR FATHER'S INFIDELITY.

YOU FOOL.
DID YOU JUST SMILE?!
HM?
NO QUESTION ABOUT IT! THAT'S THE FIRST TIME YOU SMILED!

SINCE, IF I WASN'T BORN, HIS MOTHER AND HIS FAMILY...
...WOULD BOTH HAVE STAYED TOGETHER HAPPILY.
...WE WOULD'VE FOUND IT A LONG TIME AGO.
OF COURSE, IF THERE WERE A SOLUTION TO OUR PROBLEM...
DON'T BE SILLY.
OH MAN... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

WE DON'T UNDERSTAND IT EITHER!
COME WITH ME!
HUH?
OLD MAN, IT'S TERRIBLE!
THESE ARE ALL...THE CORPSES...OF MITEDAMASHI?
AND THERE ARE MORE. OUR PEOPLE ARE STILL FINDING MORE.


Sigh...
YOU'RE SO RUDE.
Is that just your personality?
I'M A HUMAN. I SMILE. YOU'RE ANNOYING ME AGAIN.

I DO HOPE...
...HE AND HIS BROTHER WILL SOMEDAY...
...BE ABLE TO MAKE UP.

A SERIAL KILLER...
...WHOSE VICTIMS ARE ALL MITEDA-MASHI!
WHO DID THIS... AND WHY?
TODAY'S MEAL IS SALTED RICE.
TOMOR-ROW'S MEAL: SALTED RICE.
ANYONE WANT TO GUESS THE MEAL THE DAY AFTER THAT?
WHO'S THAT?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I SENSE THE "BLOOD"...
...IN YOU.

AN EYE-PATCH?!
WHAT'S THAT? I LIKE IT.
IT'S GOOD ENOUGH.
YOU'LL HELP US GET TO THE "THICK" BLOOD.
YOU WILL BE COLLATERAL.
"BLOOD?!"
COULD HE MEAN THE BLOOD OF A GATE-KEEPER?!
AGHH?!
NO GOOD. THIS BLOOD IS "THIN."
WHAT...
...IS GOING ON?!

■ TSURUGI SUGAWARA ■

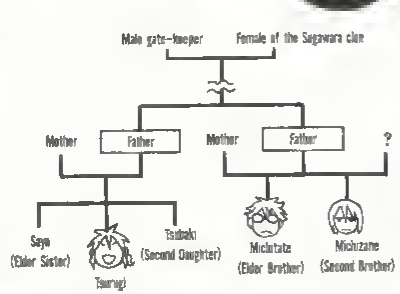
AGE: 17 YEARS OLD/ HEIGHT: 191 CM/ BLOOD TYPE: A/ BIRTHDATE: APRIL 1ST

A SECOND YEAR HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT FROM NAGOYA.
HIS APPEARANCE IS THAT OF A SALUKI (A SLEEK,
BEAUTIFUL BREED OF DOG) AND, ON THE
INSIDE, HE'S MORE OF A CHUBBY SHIBA.
THAT APPEALING COMBINATION HAS
CAUSED COUNTLESS GIRLS TO BURST
INTO TEARS OF ADORATION.
AT 191 CM, HE HAS A TALL PHYSIQUE, AND HE CAN
FREELY AND EFFORTLESSLY WIELD A LONG SWORD.
HE IS THE DESCENDANT OF A HYBRID RACE
CREATED BY A LONG AGO UNION BETWEEN A
GATE-KEEPER AND A HUMAN. HENCE, HIS BODY
CARRIES A TRACE OF GATE-KEEPER'S BLOOD.
SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH IS HIS INHERITED POWER,
ONE THAT HE PUTS TO GOOD USE AS A GUARDIAN.

*HE IS COUSIN TO MICHIZANE AND MICHITATE,
AND, FOR A LONG TIME, HE'S HAD A GRUDGING
BUT CLOSE-KNIT BOND WITH MICHITATE.
TSURUGI HAS TWO SISTERS, ONE
OLDER, THE OTHER YOUNGER.
HE AND MICHITATE CAME FROM NAGOYA TO
SEARCH FOR HIJIRI, THE ONE DESTINED TO
BE LEADER OF THE GATE-KEEPERS.
HE LOVES ALL KINDS OF FOOD, AND
EATS A LOT, ESPECIALLY ODEN.

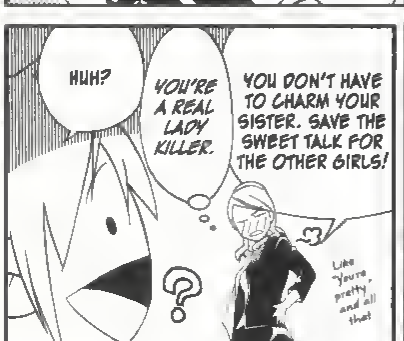
CHARACTER PROFILE:03
TSURUGI

Family Tree



SAYA! SIS, WAIT FOR ME!
YOU'RE SUCH A SLOWPOKE! IT'S NOT SO HARD, SO STOP WHINING!
HM? NO, THAT'S NOT IT!
???

THIS IS EASY FOR ME.
IDIOT.
YOUR SHOES LOOK BRAND NEW.


YOU DON'T HAVE TO CHARM YOUR SISTER. SAVE THE SWEET TALK FOR THE OTHER GIRLS!
YOU'RE A REAL LADY KILLER.
HUH?
Like "You're pretty," and all that

IT'D BE AWFUL IF YOU GOT THEM DIRTY! THIS PATH IS REALLY MUDDY SO WALK CAREFULLY.
SUCH PRETTY SHOES, AND THEY LOOK GOOD ON YOU, SIS.
YOU!

BLACK GATE
the black gate does not wait for the so
SOUL.10

I SEE. WENT TO PAY YOUR RESPECTS.
HOW'S SAYA?
SIS HASN'T CHANGED!
.....
Well I guess not
NOTHING.
EAT ALL OF IT, YOU SLOB!
AND, CHANGE OF SUBJECT, WHAT'S WITH THE BED HEAD?
AND PICK UP THOSE CRUMBS.
HEY!
DON'T TALK WITH YOUR MOUTH FULL.
GET THAT INTO YOUR HEAD!
WHAT DID I JUST SAY? DON'T TALK WITH YOUR MOUTH FULL!
THE ONLY TIME YOU EVER TALK IS WHEN YOU'RE COMPLAINING.

GET YOURSELF A GIRLFRIEND.
HMM?
YOU KNOW WHAT?
UH...
*Sugawara Clan Tomb
DEAD PEOPLE STAY DEAD, SO STOP LIVING IN THE PAST.
MAYBE DEAD PEOPLE CAN COME BACK.
HUH?

FROM THAT POINT ON, HE BECAME TALKATIVE.
NOTHING BUT COMPLAINTS.
SO I WAS SAYING ...
BUT EVEN THOUGH IT'S SAYING NASTY COMMENTS, I GUESS THAT'S HIS WAY OF OPENING UP.
I ADMIT, SOMETIMES I WANT TO KILL HIM!
UGHH
WHAT A STUPID WAY TO HOLD YOUR CHOPSTICKS. DON'T EAT SO DAMN NOISILY AND DON'T PICK AT YOUR PLATE. YOU REALLY ARE STUPID, YOU KNOW THAT?
EVERYONE! LISTEN UP, I'VE GOT AN URGENT ANNOUNCEMENT!
WHAT'S UP?
WHAT HAPPENED?
FOR THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS, THERE'S BEEN A STRING OF MURDERS, ALL OF THEM TARGETING MITEDAMASHI!
I...I JUST RAN INTO SOMEONE REALLY SUSPICIOUS!
HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT BLOOD AND SOMETHING ABOUT COLLATERAL.
IT WAS TOO DARK, THOUGH, SO I COULDN'T GET A GOOD LOOK AT HIM.
R-REALLY?!
WHO COULD IT BE, AND WHY IS HE DOING THIS?!
EVERYONE...STAY VIGILANT!
A... "MITEDAMASHI KILLER!"

DON'T YOU SMELL SOMETHING?
HM? REALLY?
JUST A LITTLE BIT OF COMMUNICATION.
EVEN A SMALL GESTURE LIKE THAT CAN BE ENOUGH.
HM?
BUT...THERE MIGHT BE SOME HOPE.
TENSE
BUT, ALMOST AS BAD, IS THE BITTERNESS AND MISTRUST BETWEEN OUR COMRADES.
SOUND: DANGEROUS
BUT...
ATMOSPHERE
IT WON'T LET US FOCUS AND GET ANYTHING DONE!
WHAT IS IT? IT'S GOT SUCH A SHARP ODOR. THIS IS--
THIS IS BLOOD!!
DO AS YOU PLEASE.
HEY, YOU'RE NOT LEADING.
YOU DON'T RESPECT HIJIRI-SAMA'S OPINION?
WHAT?

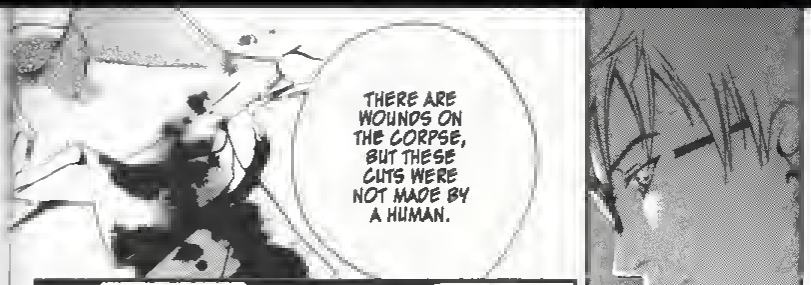
IS IT EASIER TO HAVE NO EXPECT-ATIONS?
I'M GOING TO LOOK ON MY OWN.
I CAN'T TEAM UP WITH YOU. SORRY.
HE SAID TO SPLIT UP INTO TWO TEAMS.
WAIT! WHAT WERE "THE MASTER'S" ORDERS?

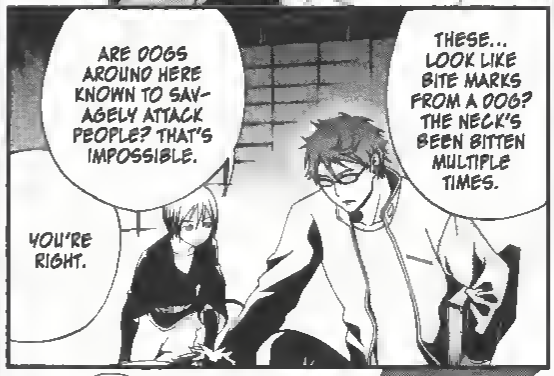
BUT HE LOOKS LIKE JUST AN ORDINARY MAN!
COULD IT BE?!
A MITEDAMASHI KILLER...
HE'S DEAD! WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
LET'S SPLIT UP INTO TWO TEAMS AND SEARCH THE AREA! TSURUGI, COME WITH ME!
YEAH!
HE'S STILL WARM. THAT MEANS THE KILLER CAN'T BE FAR AWAY.
WHAT DO YOU WANNA DO?
THE BIG IDIOT AND THE LITTLE IDIOT STUCK TOGETHER.
SPLIT UP?

WE HAVE TO LOOK OUT FOR ANYONE WEARING MITEDA-MASHI CLO-THING.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
IF THE CRIMINAL'S TARGETING MITEDAMASHI, WE MIGHT HAVE BETTER LUCK SEARCHING FROM A HIGH PLACE.

OUT OF THE WAY.
THIS IS GETTING DANGE-ROUS.
UM...

BUT I CAN SEE A LOT BETTER THAN SOME BOOKWORM.
I'M TALLER. I'LL BE ABLE TO SEE FARTHER.


THERE ARE WOUNDS ON THE CORPSE, BUT THESE CUTS WERE NOT MADE BY A HUMAN.


ARE OOGS AROUND HERE KNOWN TO SAV-AGELY ATTACK PEOPLE? THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
THESE... LOOK LIKE BITE MARKS FROM A OOG? THE NECK'S BEEN BITTEN MULTIPLE TIMES.
YOU'RE RIGHT.

PERHAPS...
ONLY SUPER-NATURAL POWERS COULD'VE INFLICTED WOUNDS LIKE THIS.
...THE INFLUENCE OF A GATE?

LET'S GO. THE CRIMINAL ...
...MIGHT BE ONE OF OUR OWN.

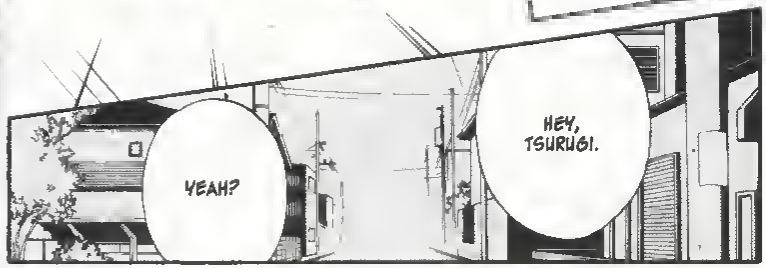
STEP BACK, HIJIKI-SAMA!

YOU DON'T HAVE ANY BUSINESS HERE, AND HERE YOU ARE LOAFING AROUND.

I CHECKED WITH THE OLD MAN AT THE BAR
HE SAID WE'RE THE ONLY ONES WORKING A JOB IN THIS PART OF TOWN TONIGHT

HEY PUNK, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

THERE'S A MITEDAMASHI OVER THERE!
THERE HE IS!


HEY, TSURUGI.
YEAH?

OH...
OH, HEY YOU! YOU'RE A MITEDAMASHI, AREN'T YOU?
IT'S GOTTEN DANGEROUS LATELY, WATCH YOUR BACK.

WE COULD RUN RIGHT INTO HIM, AND WE WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW IT.
WE'VE BEEN LOOKING AROUND LIKE MAD, BUT WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THE KILLER LOOKS LIKE.

DAMN, YOU CAUGHT ME.
I WAS HIRED TO DO IT BY SOMEBODY WANTING THAT GUY DEAD.
THERE WAS TOO MUCH MONEY IN IT FOR ME TO PASS UP.
WHY?
I HAD HIS SOUL SUCKED UP BY A BLACK GATE.
THAT'S RIGHT. I KILLED HIM.
I CAN LET YOU IN ON THIS. HOW ABOUT IT?
WANNA MAKE EASY MONEY?
YOU WON'T GET CAUGHT.
I'LL TAKE THAT AS A NO. CAN'T DO MUCH ABOUT THAT.
YOU SCUM!

HE'S THE MITEDAMASHI KILLER?!
MAN, YOU REEK OF BLOOD.
IT'S YOU?! DID YOU JUST KILL SOMEBODY?

FIRST, CLOSE THE BLACK GATE THAT GUY JUST SUMMONED.
ONE. PATH OF THE LITTLE ONES.
TWO. PATH OF THE SPECTER.
THREE. THAT PLACE BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT.
GATE BE SEALED!
I'LL WASTE YOU GUYS TOO!
I WON'T FORGIVE HIM!
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
STOP YELLING! IT'S ANNOYING.

ALL RIGHT! THEN...
KEH!
WELL DONE, TSURUGI!
AGHH!
MICHIZANE.
YOU DON'T THINK HE WAS WORKING ALONE, DO YOU?
DROP THE BEADS!
AND LET THE MITE-DAMASHI GO.
NGH...
.....
YOU THINK YOU'VE GIVEN US NO CHOICE, EH?
HAVEN'T I?!
HIJIRI-SAMA, DON'T LISTEN TO HIM.
YOU!
THAT'S THE RIGHT CALL.

I THINK I CAN SEE BETTER THAN SOME BOOKWORM.
HE SAID TO SPLIT INTO TWO TEAMS AND SEARCH.
I DON'T NEED YOU.
MICHIZANE!
MO... M...
...I WOULD BE HAPPY!
IF YOU JUST WEREN'T BORN...
I DON'T NEED YOU, I DON'T NEED YOU!
YOU'VE TURNED AGAINST ME?
EVEN YOU...
MICHI- TATE...
STOP, MOM! MICHIZANE ISN'T BAD!
IF YOU DIDN'T EXIST, I WOULD BE HAPPY.
I DON'T NEED YOU, I DON'T NEED YOU!
mutter
SEE...I SHOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED ANYTHING.
ARE YOU GOING TO ENDANGER THE LIVES OF MANY OVER THE POSSIBLE LOSS OF ONE?
THEY SAID THEY DON'T NEED YOU!
HEH HEH HEH... THEY SAID YOU'RE NOT NEEDED.
TOUGH LUCK, YOU'RE WITH ME NOW.
!

I CAN'T... SAVE HIM.
HUFF
HUFF
AH.
HUFF
YOU'LL DIE FIRST!!
HERE'S MY CHANCE.
IS HE LOSING IT?
YOU'RE A BAD SEED, MICHIZANE. ALL BAD.
YOU...
?
YOU'LL BETRAY ME JUST LIKE YOUR FATHER?!
THAT'S RIGHT. GOOD BOY.
IF I ACKNOWLEDGE HIS EXISTENCE...
IF I SHOW MY LITTLE BROTHER ANY RESPECT...
MOM... WOULD BE HURT.

YOU'RE NEXT!
MICHITATE!
HA HA! FOOL.
HIJIRI-SAMA!
STOP, TSURUGI! WE MUSTN'T KILL!
BUT!
I'VE GOT NO CHOICE -- BETTER KILL THIS GUY!
CRAP! I CAN'T LET THIS GUY GO. I'M STUCK HERE!
NO MATTER THE REASON, A GATE-KEEPER MUST NOT INTERFERE WITH LIFE AND DEATH.
NOT ONLY THAT...

MICHITATE...
YES.
I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO STANDS BY YOUR SIDE, MOM.
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE ON MY SIDE, AREN'T YOU MICHITATE?
THANK YOU, THANK YOU.

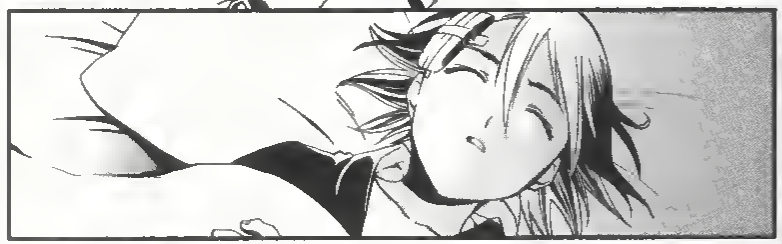
YOUR OWN LITTLE BROTHER MEANS THAT LITTLE TO YOU?
HUH?!
DON'T JUST LIE THERE! SAY SOMETHING, STUPID!
IS THAT HOW IT IS?

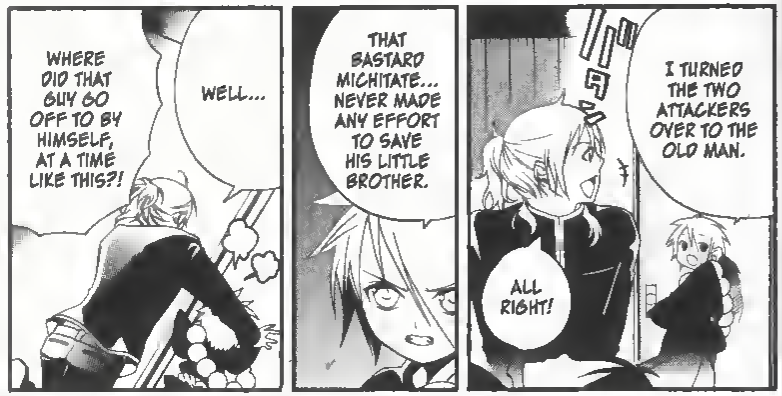
IT WOULD MAKE A GREAT STORY IF YOU PROTECTED ME WITHOUT TSURUGI'S HELP.
MICHI-TATE!
I CUT HIM GOOD. HE'LL NEVER MOVE AGAIN.
DIE!
EVEN IF YOU ABANDON MICHI-ZANE...
...WASN'T YOUR GOAL TO TRY AND SAVE US?
AND YOU'RE JUST LYING THERE.
AND YOU SAID SOMETHING THAT REALLY PISSED ME OFF.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?
I SAID YOU'RE SLACKING OFF.
I WASN'T TALKING TO YOU. GET LOST!

EXCUSE ME.
BUT I'M NOT JUST LYING HERE, SLACKING OFF.
MICHI-TATE!
THAT'S...
YOU'RE... NOT EVEN HURT?!
THAT BASTARD!
HE WAS JUST PRETENDING TO SLEEP?
HIJIRI-SAMA, ARE YOU INJURED?
N-NO, I'M FINE. YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE IN ONE PIECE TOO, MICHIZANE.
HE GOT LUCKY.
HM?
WE DID IT! WE RULE!
I RE-VERSED THE INNER-OUTER ORIENTATION OF THE "SHIELD." YOU'LL BURN YOURSELF IF YOU SLAM INTO IT FROM THE INSIDE.
HUH?! THERE'S A WALL HERE?! I CAN'T GET OUT!

I'M JUST GETTING WARMED UP.
EGH?!
I COULD USE SOME PRACTICE, AFTER ALL.
I'LL NAIL THIS NEXT ONE.
EGH!
AGHH!
NOT ENOUGH.
MICHITATE, THAT'S ENOUGH! YOU'RE GOING OVERBOARD!
NOT YET.
CURIOUS.
I'M STILL REVVING TO GO.

STOP IT ALREADY! YOU'LL KILL HIM!
Gotcha
NOT YET.
HE'S A SCARY "OLDER BROTHER," ISN'T HE?
I SEE.




WHERE DID THAT GUY GO OFF TO BY HIMSELF, AT A TIME LIKE THIS?!
WELL...
THAT BASTARD MICHITATE... NEVER MADE ANY EFFORT TO SAVE HIS LITTLE BROTHER.
ALL RIGHT!
I TURNED THE TWO ATTACKERS OVER TO THE OLD MAN.

NOT YET.
STILL TOO REVVED UP.
AAGH!
EGH!

NOT YET.

IS HE... ANGRY ABOUT SOME-THING? WHAT FOR...?
MICHITATE NEVER FLIES OFF THE HANDLE LIKE THIS. IT'S NOT LIKE HIM.

HMPH.
WERE YOU BLUFFING WHEN YOU SAID YOU'D SHOW YOU CAN BE MORE USEFUL THAN ME?
IF YOU DON'T, YOU'LL ONLY BRING TROUBLE TO HIJIRI-SAMA.
YOU NEED TO REST YOUR BODY NOW.
AND I REMEMBER HOW ANGRY AND UPSET HE LOOKED WHEN I SAID THAT.
I TOLD HIM THAT I THOUGHT HIS OLDER BROTHER WAS AN AWFUL PERSON.
HM?
WHAT MICHIZANE WANTS IS TO BE RESPECTED BY HIS OLDER BROTHER... SO HE BECAME A MITEDAMASHI, AM I RIGHT?
REALLY?

WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
P
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO KIND ALL OF A SUDDEN?
YOU'RE IN TOO MUCH PAIN TO SLEEP, RIGHT?
YOU CAN... STOP NOW...
STROKING A HUMAN'S HEAD WILL EMIT ALPHA WAVES, ALLOWING A GOOD NIGHT'S REST.

CHARACTER PROFILE:04

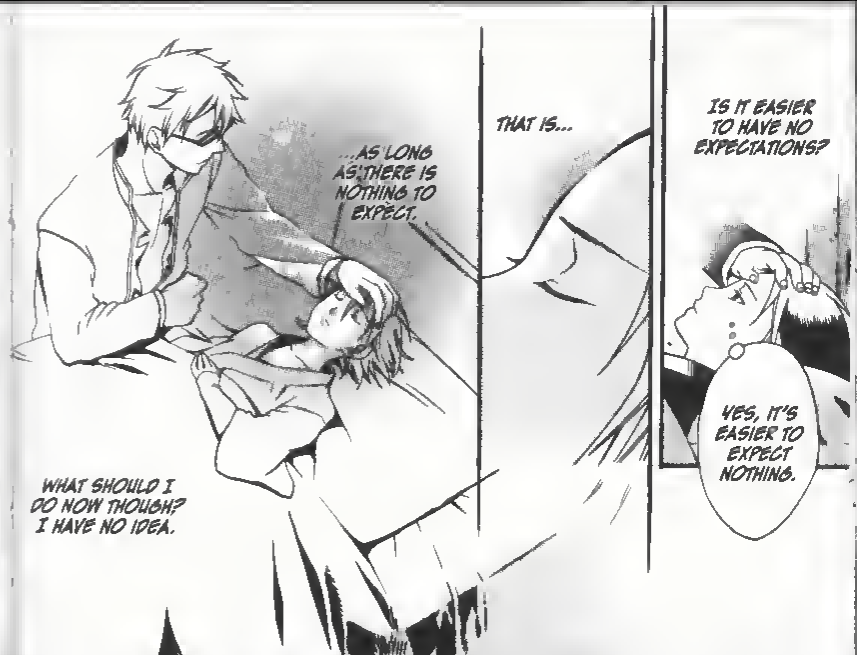
MICHITATE

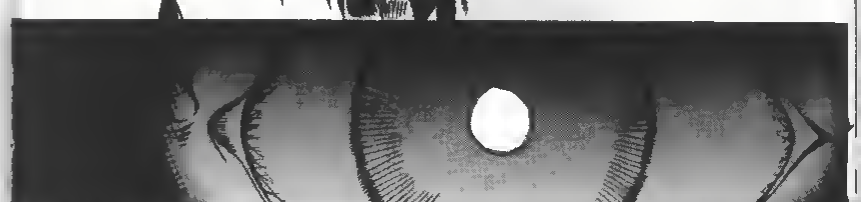
■MICHITATE SUGAWARA■

AGE: 17 YEARS OLD/ HEIGHT: 180 CM/ BLOOD TYPE: O/ BIRTHDATE: MARCH 3RD

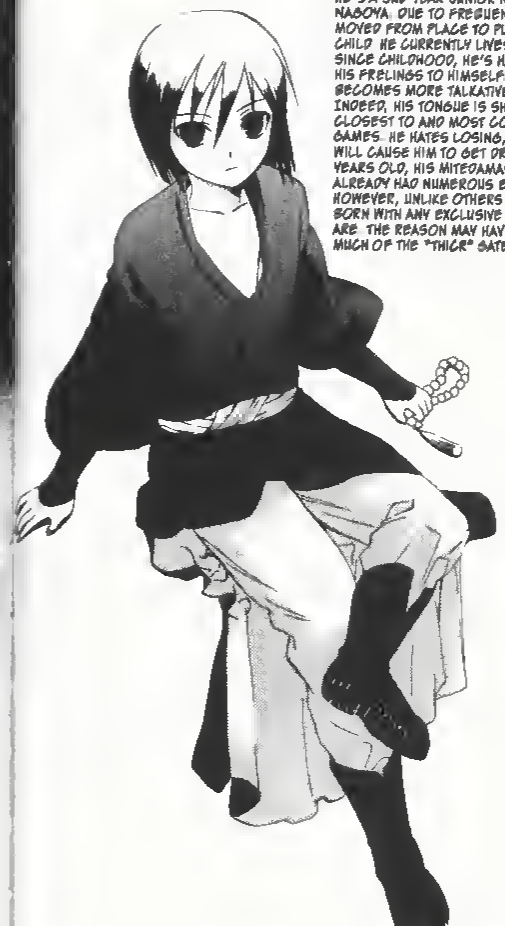
FROM NAGOYA. LIKE TSURUGI, HE'S ALSO A SECOND YEAR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT. BUT BECAUSE MICHITATE'S BIRTHDAY IS IN MARCH AND TSURUGI'S IS IN APRIL, IT ONLY SEEMS THAT TSURUGI IS A YEAR YOUNGER. FOR SOME REASON OR ANOTHER, HE PREFERS TSURUGI IS A GOOD PARTNER. "PSYCHOKINESIS" IS THE POWER HE HAS RECEIVED AS A GUARDIAN. HE USES PSYCHOKINESIS ONLY ON OCCASION, THOUGH, BECAUSE HE'S MORE FAMILIAR WITH THE PRACTICE OF USING "BOOKS," SO HE IS USUALLY SEEN CARRYING ONE.

HE'S HAD A STORMY RELATIONSHIP SINCE CHILDHOOD WITH HIS BROTHER, MICHIZANE, WHO WAS BORN TO A DIFFERENT MOTHER. HE DEEPLY RESENTS HIS FATHER AFTER HIS BETRAYAL OF HIS MOTHER, AND FATHERING A CHILD WITH ANOTHER WOMAN. HE CURRENTLY LIVES IN TOKYO WITH HIS MOTHER, WHO WAS ABANDONED BY HIS FATHER IN NAGOYA. HE HAS A SWEET TOOTH, AND HIS PASTIMES ARE READING AND HIS RUBIK'S CUBE.


...AS LONG AS THERE IS NOTHING TO EXPECT.
THAT IS...
IS IT EASIER TO HAVE NO EXPECTATIONS?
YES, IT'S EASIER TO EXPECT NOTHING.
WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW THOUGH? I HAVE NO IDEA.



THE TWO KILLERS HAVE BEEN HANDED OVER TO THE OLD MAN WHO RUNS HAZAMA BAR.
THEY'RE LOCKED UP IN AN EMPTY ROOM IN THE BAR.
BUT WE WORKED TOGETHER...
...SUCCEEDED IN CAPTURING THE CRIMINAL.
LATELY, THERE HAVE BEEN A STRING OF MITEDAMASHI MURDERS.
I FOUND YOU.
BUT LITTLE DID WE KNOW...



■ MICHIZANE SUGAWARA ■

AGE: 15 YEARS OLD/ HEIGHT: 161 CM/ BLOOD TYPE: AB/ BIRTHDATE: FEBRUARY 24TH

MICHITATE'S LITTLE BROTHER, BORN FROM ANOTHER MOTHER. HE'S A 3RD YEAR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT, ALSO FROM NAGOYA. DUE TO FREQUENT FAMILY PROBLEMS, HE OFTEN MOVED FROM PLACE TO PLACE WITH HIS SINGLE PARENT AS A CHILD. HE CURRENTLY LIVES WITH HIS GRANDMOTHER IN TOKYO SINCE CHILDHOOD. HE'S HAD A SHIET NATURE, AND OFTEN KEEPS HIS FEELINGS TO HIMSELF. WHEN HE WARMS TO A PERSON, HE BECOMES MORE TALKATIVE, COMPLAINING AND CRITICIZING FREELY. INDEED, HIS TONGUE IS SHARPEST TOWARDS THOSE HE FEELS CLOSEST TO AND MOST COMFORTABLE WITH. HIS HOBBY IS VIDEO GAMES. HE HATES LOSING, AND EVEN LOSING AT A VIDEO GAME WILL CAUSE HIM TO GET DRAMATICALLY UPSET. AT A BIT OVER 15 YEARS OLD, HIS MITEDAMASHI SKILLS ARE EXCELLENT, AND HE'S ALREADY HAD NUMEROUS EXPERIENCES WITH CLOSING GATES. HOWEVER, UNLIKE OTHERS IN THE SUGAWARA CLAN, HE WASN'T BORN WITH ANY EXCLUSIVE POWERS AS GUARDIANS NORMALLY ARE. THE REASON MAY HAVE TO DO WITH A VARIANCE IN HOW MUCH OF THE "THICK" GATE-KEEPER'S BLOOD HE INHERITED.

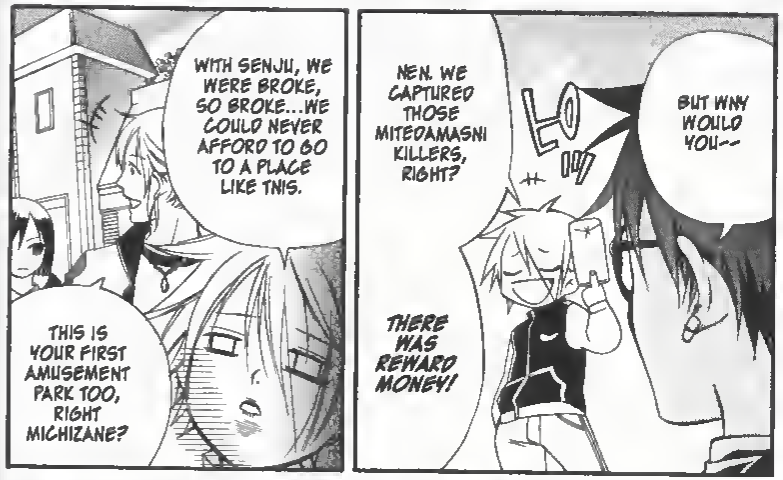
CHARACTER PROFILE:05

MICHIZANE

A FEW DAYS AFTER WE CAPTURED THE KILLERS...
GOOD WORK ON THE ARREST!
I WANTED TO REWARD YOU! SO...
...AS A SPECIAL TREAT, I BROUGHT US ALL TO AN AMUSEMENT PARK!

THICK BLOOD...
...THAT THERE WAS STILL "SOMETHING" DRAWING CLOSER AND ON THE VERGE OF OVERTURNING OUR VERY LIVES.
BLACK GATE
the black gate does not wait for the soul to die
SOUL.11

THANK YOU VERY MUCH, NIJIRI-SAMA!
DESPITE YOUR SOUR LOOK, YOU'RE PRETTY EXCITED, AREN'T YOU?
IN ORDER TO VISIT THE AMUSEMENT PARK WITHOUT WASTING TIME, PLEASE FOLLOW MY INSTRUCTIONS!
HM?
I'VE STUDIED THE LAYOUT, THE CONSTRUCTION, AND THE TIME REQUIRED FOR EACH ATTRACTION, AND I'VE ALREADY DEVISED THE OPTIMAL ROUTE.
I THINK THIS IS THE FIRST TIME NE'S REALLY "COME AND NUNG OUT WITH EVERYONE."
FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, NIS FAMILY'S BEEN SPLIT APART. NE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HIS MOTHER'S FACE.
MICHIZANE... IS QUIET AND DOESN'T HAVE MANY FRIENDS.


WITH SENJU, WE WERE BROKE, SO BROKE...WE COULD NEVER AFFORD TO GO TO A PLACE LIKE THIS.
THIS IS YOUR FIRST AMUSEMENT PARK TOO, RIGHT MICHIZANE?
NEN. WE CAPTURED THOSE MITEDAMASNI KILLERS, RIGHT?
THERE WAS REWARD MONEY!
BUT WHY WOULD YOU--

TNIS IS LAME.
IT IS, BUT DON'T THINK I'M ANYTHING LIKE THAT LOSER.

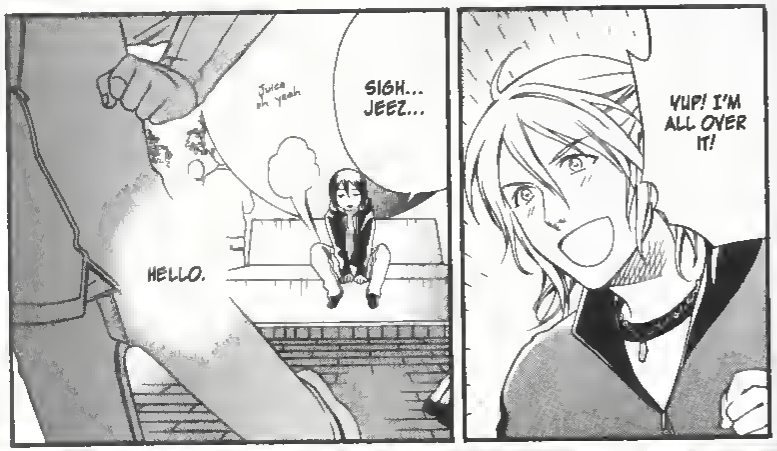
LISTEN, I REALLY HATE WASTEFULNESS.
I'M SURROUNDED BY IDIOTS
WHAT DO YOU MEAN WASTEFUL?! SOMETIMES ...
THE SOUND EFFECTS IN THE BACKGROUND TELL US EVERYTHING.
I HAVE ZERO INTEREST IN BEING HERE.

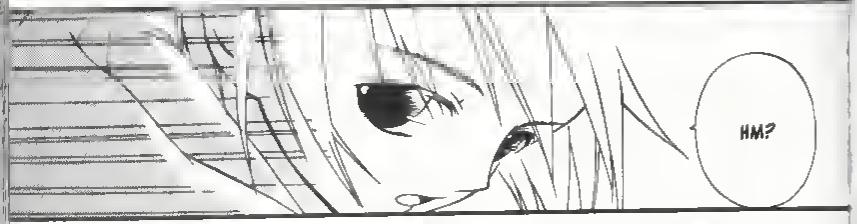
AND WHAT THAT MEANS ...
... IS WE'RE BACK TO SQUARE ONE.
SO...SO YOU'RE SAYING THE REAL KILLER IS STILL OUT THERE?
WA HA HA HA HA HA!
WAH HA HA HA HA HA!
REMEMBER THAT.
IN THE LAND OF DREAMS, "NORMAL" DOESN'T EXIST.
ISN'T THIS RIDE MEANT FOR LITTLE KIDS?
WA HA HA HA, HORSEY!
YOU REALLY ARE HOPELESS, MICHIZANE.
I'M A WARRIOR!
Michitate's amusement park words of wisdom — No. 1

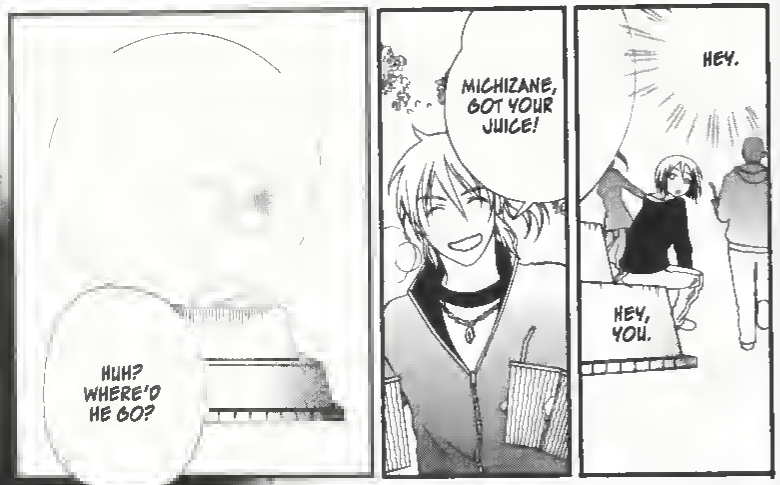
MEANWHILE, AT HAZAMA'S BAR...
I DON'T KNOW NOTHING ABOUT ANY MITEDAMASHI KILLER.
LIKE... I... SAID...
HIS MOTHER DIED.
I WONDER WHAT SHE WAS LIKE?
HE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HIS MOTHER'S FACE?
THIS'LL BE A NICE MEMORY!
HEH, I SEE.
WHY DON'T YOU COMPARE THE TIMES WHEN THE MITEDAMASHI WAS ATTACKED ...
AND THE TIME WHEN WE WERE WORKING?
IT'S A SOLID ALIBI.
WE'RE HITMEN. BUT WE HAVEN'T KILLED MITEDAMASHI
DON'T LIE! I ALREADY HAVE PROOF!
オーイ!

HM?
OH, I'LL GO TOO!
Sorry!
I'M GOING TO GET SOME ICE WATER.
UGH... I FEEL SICK....
DON'T FOLLOW ME!
YES.
WHAT?!
ONE OTHER THING.
HE SAID THAT THE GUYS WE CAPTURED THE OTHER DAY WEREN'T THE CULPRITS.
THAT WAS THE OLD MAN FROM THE BAR.
WHAT HAP-PENED?

IT SAYS IF YOU TURN THE CENTER, THE CUP WILL SPIN. I'M TURNING IT!
AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO SEES A MAJOR PROBLEM WITH THIS PLAN?
LET'S RIDE THAT NEXT ONE!
GRAB
HERE WE GO!
MICHITATE'S BEING NICE?!
YOU DID WELL.
"IT'S NOT AN AMUSEMENT PARK WITHOUT A LITTLE RECKLESS-NESS."
SO SORRY...
DAMN YOUR SUPER STRENGTH!
おえ
Spun too fast
Michitate's amusement park words of wisdom -- No. 2
TAP


Juice on yeah
SIGH... JEEZ...
HELLO.
YUP! I'M ALL OVER IT!


HM?


HUH? WHERE'D HE GO?
MICHIZANE, GOT YOUR JUICE!
HEY.
HEY, YOU.

WHAT?!
HE ALSO SAID HE'LL BE WANTING THE REWARD MONEY BACK.

THOSE GUYS WEREN'T THE KILLERS?
Agh! But I used a lot of it up already!
.....

SO, WHO COULD IT BE...
MICHIZANE! MICHIZANE!
JUICE!
I SAID I'M SORRY!
LOOK, THEY'RE SELLING IT THERE.
YOU'RE BUYING JUICE FOR ALL OF US, RIGHT?
OF COURSE.

AM I HEARING THINGS? I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMEONE CALLING ME FROM HERE.
キョロキョロ
HEY, YOU.
WHO'S THAT?!
COME HERE.
WHERE'S IT COMING FROM?
YO.
WHEN DID HE GET BEHIND ME?
WHO... ARE YOU?!
WHAT IS GOING ON?
WHY AM I SO PETRIFIED? I CAN'T MOVE!
ブルブル
NO MISTAKE.
THICK BLOOD.
I'M SCARED.
ANSWER ME! WHO ARE YOU?!
DON'T TRY AND COME OFF SO MENACING. YOU'RE NOT FOOLING ME WITH THAT ACT.

EVEN WHEN MY MOM TRIED TO FIND OUT, NOTHING CAME OF IT.
SHE TOLD ME... SHE DIDN'T KNOW A SINGLE THING ABOUT MICHIZANE'S MOTHER.
I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING EITHER.
ALL RIGHT, I'LL TELL YOU. MY NAME IS...
...KIKYO.

YOU'VE GOT BACKBONE, HAVEN'T YOU?
I LIKE YOU.
I APOLOGIZE.
THAT'S A PERSONAL QUESTION.
BUT I FEEL BAD THAT MICHIZANE NEVER KNEW HER.
HEY, MICHITATE.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MICHIZANE'S MOTHER?

I AM ONE OF THE GATE-KEEPERS.
KIKYO-SAMA!
A GATE-KEEPER?!
IMPOS-SIBLE!
I HEARD THAT THE GATE-KEEPERS ALL DIED EXCEPT FOR HIJIRI.
A LOT OF STRANGE THINGS HAPPENED.
I CALLED YOU HERE BECAUSE...
...I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU.
FIRST... TAKE A LOOK.
FAVOR?

AS YOU CAN SEE, HE'S NOT DOING VERY WELL.
MY OLDER BROTHER...
LIKE YOU SAID, MY OLDER BROTHER AND I ARE BOTH DEAD. AND...
I SAW HIM DIE WITH MY OWN EYES.
WE PASSED INTO THE "BEYOND," THROUGH THE GATE!
IT'S A TUNNEL OF LIGHT.
WHAT YOU SEE NOW IS WHAT LIES BEYOND THE GATE...
WHEN I DIED, I BECAME LIGHT... AND I WAS FLOATING THROUGH THE GATE.
...WHEN IT HAPPENED...
?!
...ATE...
GATE, GATE, GATE...
CLOSE...
FOR-EVER...
WOR...
WORLD...

OLDER BROTHER... OLDER BROTHER DIED TOO?!
CRAP! WAKE UP!
OLDER BRO-THER?!
...IT'LL BE THE END OF YOU!
IF YOU GET PULLED IN...
I WON'T LET YOU GO!
CRAP!
CRAP...
MY MOVE-MENTS ALL SLOWED DOWN!

THAT--- THAT'S SISTER-IN-LAW!
ON THE OTHER SIDE... LIGHT? AND ARE THESE THE INTRUDERS WHO WERE KILLED BY MY OLDER BROTHER?
EVEN MY SOUL WILL VANISH INTO OBLIVION.
SISTER-IN-LAW!
I HEARD THAT BEYOND THE GATE IS "THE PLACE WHERE SOULS RETURN."
IF YOU GET PULLED INTO THE LIGHT, THAT'S THE END.
SHE WAS PULLED IN... BY THE LIGHT?!
SISTER-IN-LAW!

HELP ME SAVE MY OLDER BROTHER.
TO SAVE HIM, I NEED...YOUR THICK BLOOD!
PLEASE...
I LOOKED INTO...WHO YOUR REAL MOTHER WAS
"THICK BLOOD"?
UNGH...
...THE WOMAN WITH WHOM HE HAD AN AFFAIR. SHE WAS A GATE-KEEPER.
YOUR FATHER WAS A GUARDIAN AND YOUR MOTHER...
YOUR MOTHER WAS... A GATE-KEEPER.
SOMEHOW...I MANAGED TO NUDGE OLDER BROTHER AWAY FROM THE LIGHT AND BACK TOWARDS THE GATE.
AND I BROUGHT OLDER BROTHER WITH ME.
SO I TURNED THAT IDEA AROUND AND BET THAT IF I COULD GET BACK OUTSIDE OF THE GATE, MY SOUL WOULD SURVIVE.
BUT THE SOULS THAT COME BACK OUT OF A GATE BECOME WANDERING SPIRITS, ISN'T THAT SO?
YOU SEE ME NOW IN MY FULL APPEARANCE BUT...
BUT WHAT'S THIS FAVOR?
I UNDERSTAND.
WHAT YOU SEE IS JUST MY SOUL, NOT MY BODY.
BUT BECAUSE HE WAS ALREADY TOO DEEP INTO THE TUNNEL, A LOT OF HIS SOUL GOT PULLED INTO THE LIGHT. HE RETURNED TO THIS WORLD WITH AN INCOMPLETE FORM.

I NEED YOU TO GIVE UP YOUR BODY, WHICH FLOWS WITH THE BLOOD OF THE GATE-KEEPERS, TO OLDER BROTHER.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN TOLD...NO ONE NEEDS ME.
I NEED YOU. NO ONE ELSE CAN HELP ME.
NEED? ME?
YES.
...AND TO SLEEP... FOREVER.
LIES!
I'M 15 YEARS OLD...IT DOESN'T ADD UP.
THE GATE-KEEPERS ALL DIED 18 YEARS AGO. ONLY HIJIRI SURVIVED!
YOUR MOTHER FLED HER VILLAGE WITH YOUR FATHER, SO SHE WAS SAFE. SHE DIED SOON AFTER GIVING BIRTH TO YOU.
YOU POOR THING.
...I NEED YOUR BLOOD. THE BLOOD THAT'S CAUSED YOUR PEOPLE TO SHUN YOU.
BUT THE FACT IS...
I KNOW ALL THIS COMES AS A SHOCK TO YOU.
PAP
TO FINALLY KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR MOTHER.

MICHIZANE!
OH.
OH, IT'S YOU!
THE "THIN BLOODED" ONE FROM BEFORE.
HA HA!
LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN KEEP UP!
OH.

WAIT!
HOLD ON!
YOU'RE THE GUY WHO ATTACKED ME THE OTHER NIGHT, AREN'T YOU?!
HAND OVER MICHIZANE!
JEEZ! IT'S GONNA REALLY FREAK OUT A LOT OF PEOPLE IF WE RAISE HELL HERE.
GIVE UP, MR. SUPERHERO!

WHOA!
INTER-ESTING!
WH-WHAT WAS THAT?!

I KNOW WE GOT OFF TO A ROUGH START JUST NOW, BUT I'M IMPRESSED. YOU'RE REALLY STRONG!
A FAVOR?!
IN RETURN, LISTEN UP. I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU TOO.
HOW ABOUT HELPING US OUT?
HELP ME... EXTERMINATE MITEDAMASHI!!!
WE COULD USE YOU.
SO YOU'RE THE MITEDAMASHI KILLER?!
WHY WOULD I COOPERATE WITH A GUY LIKE YOU?
WHA--!
IT COULDN'T BE!

I'M NO HERO!
I COULD RIP THIS PLACE APART AND INJURE HUNDREDS...
.. I WOULDN'T CARE, SO LONG AS THAT KID YOU'VE GOT IS UNHARMED!
I SEE.
.....
ALL RIGHT, HE'S YOURS.
FOR NOW.
AGH!

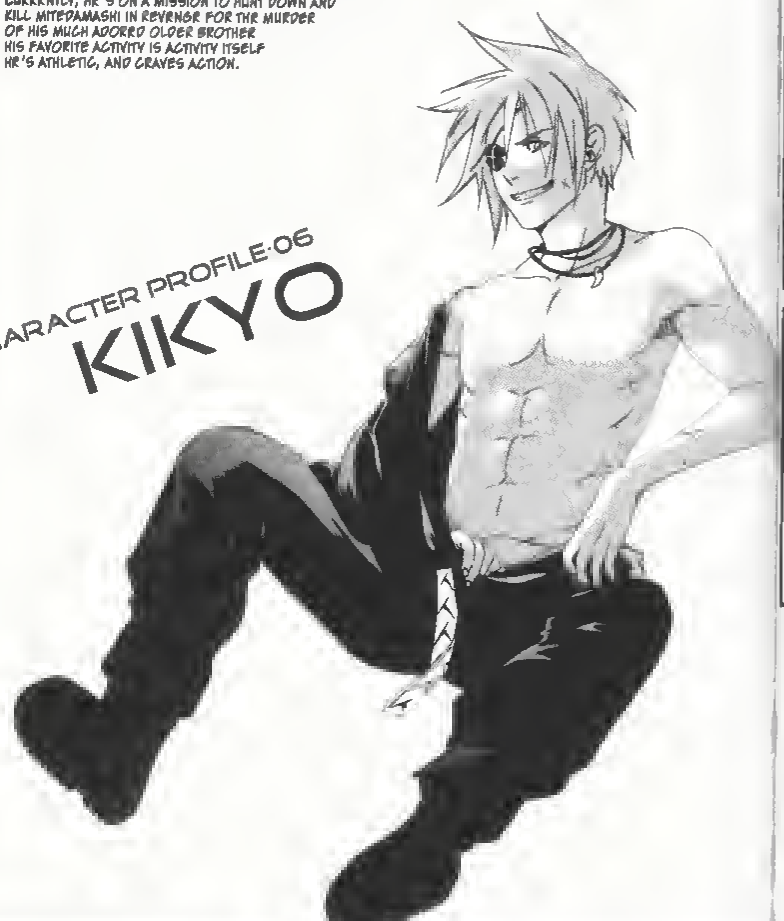
YOU'VE GOT TILL TONIGHT TO DECIDE. TONIGHT, I'LL COME TO SEE YOU
TELL ME YOUR ANSWER THEN.
IF OLDER BROTHER CAN LIVE INSIDE A BODY AGAIN, HE MIGHT DO IT.
BUT YOU'VE GOT TO DO WHAT I TELL YOU.
THINK ABOUT IT, PLAYBOY.
BECAUSE I CAN...
...GIVE WHAT YOU "DESIRE" MOST.
*Sugawara Clan Tomb
WHAT...

■ KIKYO ■
AGE: UNSPECIFIED/ HEIGHT: 182 CM/BLOOD TYPE: UNKNOWN/ BIRTHDATE: UNKNOWN

HE HAS A CARING, FRIENDLY, BROTHERLY PERSONALITY, LOVES CHILDREN, AND IS LIKED BY EVERYONE. THE PATCH OVER HIS RIGHT EYE COVERS A WOUND HE RECEIVED WHILE TRYING TO PROTECT CHILDREN DURING AN ATTACK ON THE HIDDEN VILLAGE OF THE GATE-KEEPERS. HE LOST HIS LIFE DURING THE SECOND ASSAULT ON THE VILLAGE, BUT HIS SOUL MANAGED TO ESCAPE BACK OUT THE GATE. HE NOW EXISTS ONLY IN SOUL FORM. HE CAN NOW SEE OUT OF BOTH EYES SINCE HE'S NO LONGER LIMITED BY HIS BODILY INJURIES. CURRENTLY, HE'S ON A MISSION TO HUNT DOWN AND KILL MITEDAMASHI IN REVENGE FOR THE MURDER OF HIS MUCH ADORED OLDER BROTHER. HIS FAVORITE ACTIVITY IS ACTIVITY ITSELF. HE'S athletic, AND CRAVES ACTION.

CHARACTER PROFILE·06

KIKYO



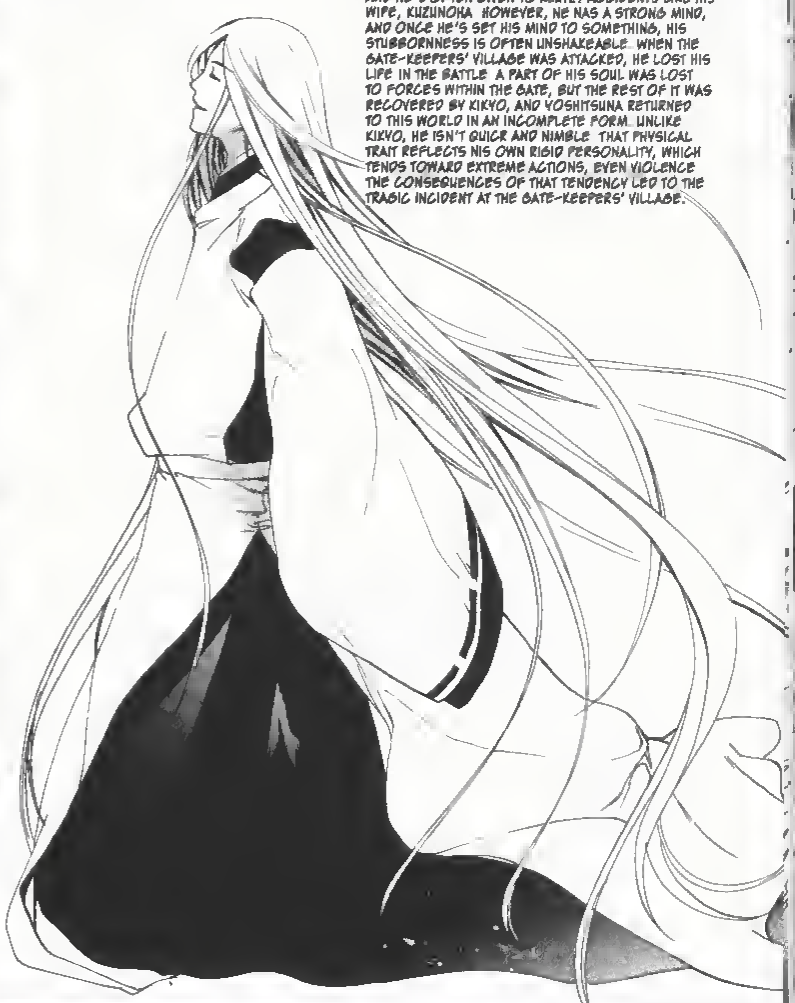
TSUBAKI WAS A SICKLY CHILD.
-MY PRECIOUS TSUBAKI-
IT'S ALL RIGHT. I'LL ALWAYS PROTECT YOU.
BUT WHEN I WAS WITH HER, SHE WAS ALWAYS SMILING.

CHARACTER PROFILE:07

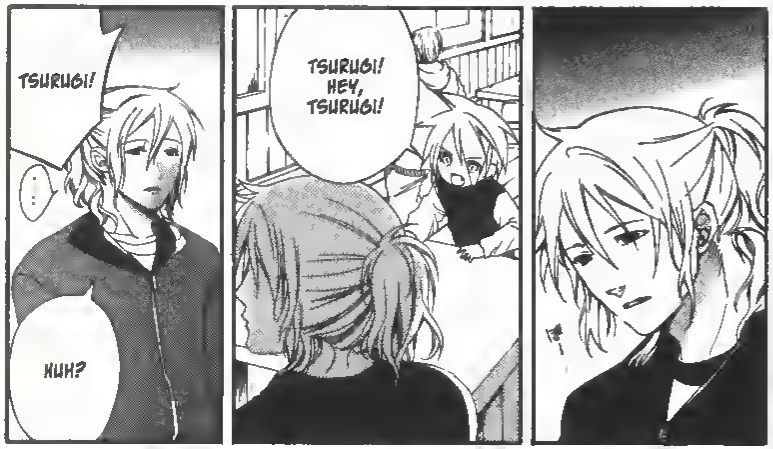
YOSHITSUNA

■YOSHITSUNA■
AGE: UNSPECIFIED/
HEIGHT: 182 CM/BLOOD TYPE: UNKNOWN/
BIRTHDATE: UNKNOWN

KIKYO'S BROTHER AND HIJIRI'S FATHER. AS "LEADER" OF THE GATE-KEEPERS, HIS GENTLE AND QUIET PERSONALITY EARNED HIM TRUST AND RESPECT. HE CAN BE ABSENT-MINDED AT TIMES, HE CRIES OFTEN, AND HE'S OFTEN GIVEN TO KLUTZY ACCIDENTS LIKE HIS WIFE, KUZUNOHA. HOWEVER, HE HAS A STRONG MIND, AND ONCE HE'S SET HIS MIND TO SOMETHING, HIS STUBBORNNESS IS OFTEN UNSHAKEABLE. WHEN THE GATE-KEEPERS' VILLAGE WAS ATTACKED, HE LOST HIS LIFE IN THE BATTLE. A PART OF HIS SOUL WAS LOST TO FORCES WITHIN THE GATE, BUT THE REST OF IT WAS RECOVERED BY KIKYO, AND YOSHITSUNA RETURNED TO THIS WORLD IN AN INCOMPLETE FORM. UNLIKE KIKYO, HE ISN'T QUICK AND NIMBLE. THAT PHYSICAL TRAIT REFLECTS HIS OWN RIGID PERSONALITY, WHICH TENDS TOWARD EXTREME ACTIONS, EVEN VIOLENCE. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT TENDENCY LED TO THE TRAGIC INCIDENT AT THE GATE-KEEPERS' VILLAGE.



BLACK GATE
the black gate
SOUL.12


TSURUGI!
HUH?
TSURUGI! HEY, TSURUGI!

YOU'RE CHECKED OUT. WHAT HAPPENED?!
.....

SOMETHING HAPPENED, DION'T IT?
NEED TO TALK.
ぐいっ

WHAT?!
TSURUGI TELLS ME HE'LL BE BACK AGAIN TONIGHT.
HIS TARGET IS MICHIZANE
ARE YOU SERIOUS?! YOU SAY YOU CROSSED PATHS WITH THE MITEDAMASHI KILLER?!
TONIGHT! THAT DOESN'T GIVE US ENOUGH TIME! AND WHY MICHIZANE?

SAY NOTHING.
CRINGE
HE ALREADY RESENTS THE FACT THAT A GATE-KEEPER AND A FEMALE ANCESTOR OF THE SUGAWARA CLAN GOT TOGETHER. HE WOULD JUST HATE ME MORE.
WHO KNOWS...
IF THEY KNEW THAT MY MOTHER WAS A GATE-KEEPER

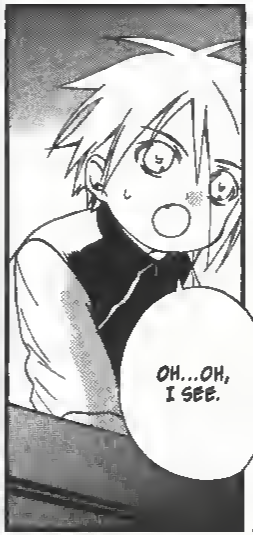
IH THAT CASE... MAYBE WE SHOULD HOLE UP AT HAZAMA'S BAR.
WE HEED TO COME UP WITH A STRATEGY RIGHT HOW!
FIRST, WE CAH'T GET NORMAL HUMANS INVOLVED.
I CAH'T BELIEVE YOU'D BE LIKE THAT.
TSUBAKI, HUH?
TELL ME.
...TE.
WE'LL AMBUSH THEM!
ALSO, LET'S RECRUIT AS MAHY MITEDAMASHI AS WE CAN TO HELP.
YOU'RE RIGHT. LET'S HEAD TO THE BAR FIRST.
UGH.
UGHHH.
OW.
GAH
MICHITATE...
WHAT'S WROHG WITH YOU?
YOU STILL SPACIHG OUT?
OH, YOU'RE BACK?!
.....

THE REAL MITEDAMASHI KILLER IS GOING TO SHOW UP HERE.
HE'LL APPEAR TONIGHT, HE SAID, AND HE'S COMING TO ABOUT MICHIZANE-KUN!

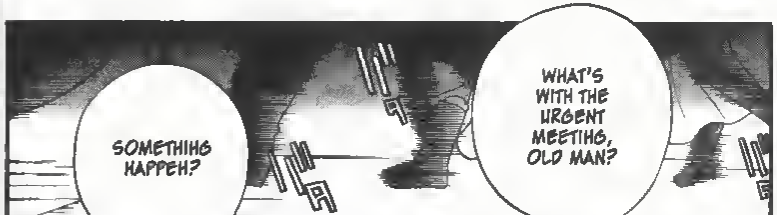
BUT... I COULD GET KILLED.

...DON'T WANT TO RISK GETTING KILLED!
BUT I...
S-SORRY... BUT I HAVE A FAMILY.

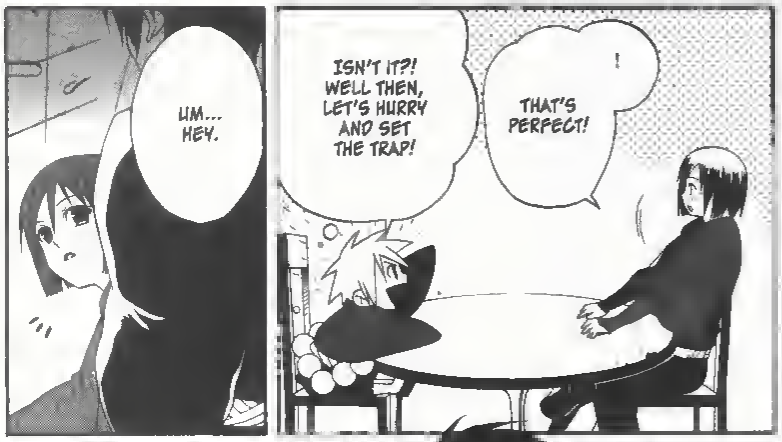
AS MITEDAMASHI, YOU WILL ALL EVENTUALLY BECOME TARGETS, WON'T YOU?!
THIS IS OUR CHANCE! LET'S ALL WORK TOGETHER AND CAPTURE THE CRIMINAL!

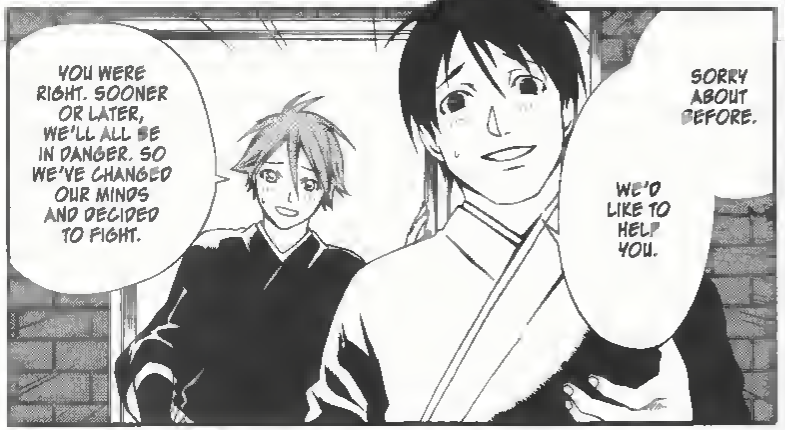

OH...OH, I SEE.

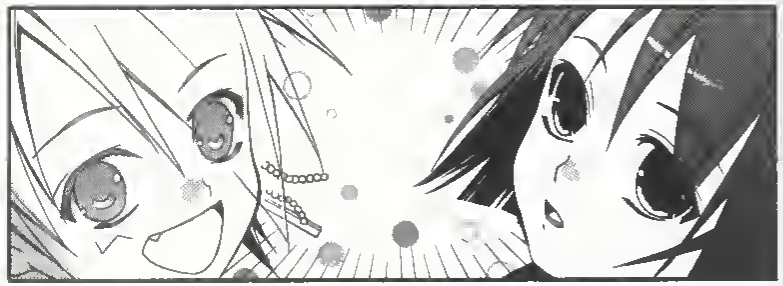
I'M OKAY. HAD A LOT TO TELL MICHITATE.
HE HEARD ME OUT.

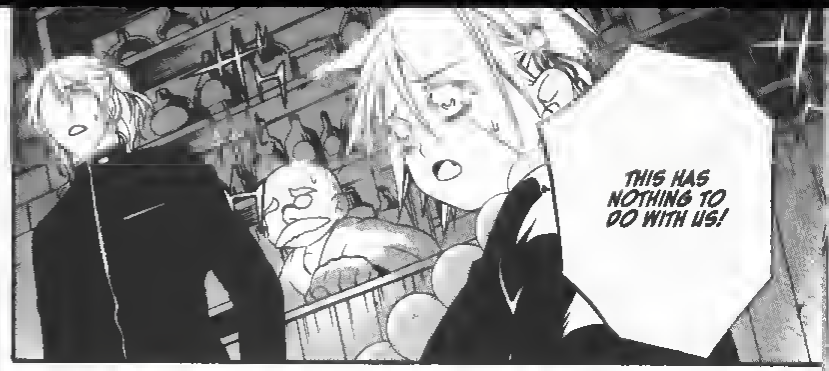

SOMETHING HAPPEN?
WHAT'S WITH THE URGENT MEETING, OLD MAN?

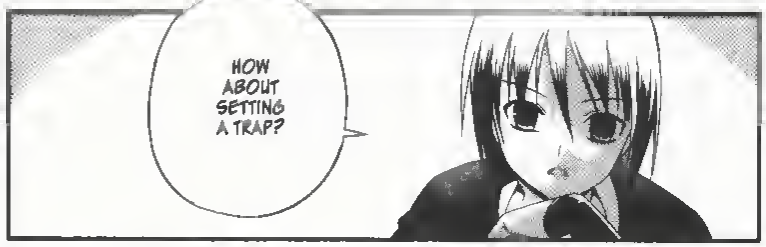
SORRY FOR THE LATE NOTICE, EVERYONE.
BUT I NEED YOUR HELP URGENTLY!


UM... HEY.
ISN'T IT?! WELL THEN, LET'S HURRY AND SET THE TRAP!
!
THAT'S PERFECT!


YOU WERE RIGHT. SOONER OR LATER, WE'LL ALL BE IN DANGER. SO WE'VE CHANGED OUR MINDS AND DECIDED TO FIGHT.
SORRY ABOUT BEFORE.
WE'D LIKE TO HELP YOU.



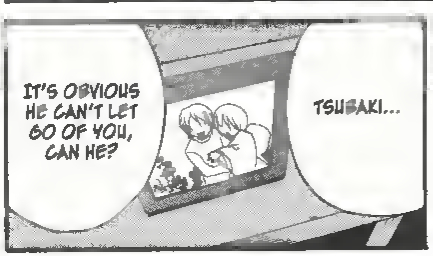

THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH US!

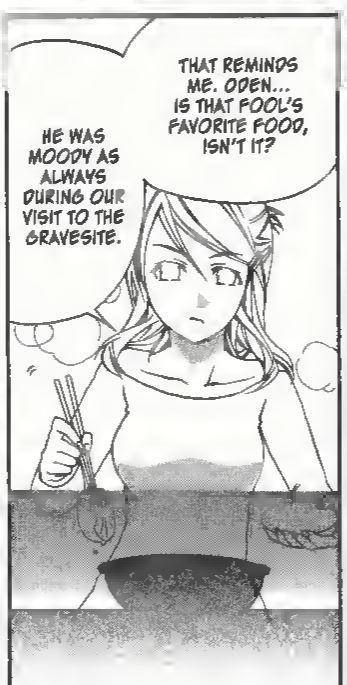

HOW ABOUT SETTING A TRAP?

?
YOU'RE RIGHT. HOW ABOUT... MICHIZANE AND TSURUGI STAGE AN AMBUSH WHILE...
...MICHITATE, WHO CAN USE FLYING WEAPONS, CAN HIDE AND TARGET HIM FROM BEHIND!
THERE'S FOUR OF US. CAN'T WE DO SOMETHING?
HMM.

WHAT?!

ALL RIGHT! YOU HIDE HERE!
YOU GUYS ARE HERE!
THE SUN HAS ALREADY SET.
WE'VE ONLY GOT A LITTLE BIT OF TIME.


IT'S OBVIOUS HE CAN'T LET GO OF YOU, CAN HE?
TSUBAKI...


THAT REMINDS ME. ODEN... IS THAT FOOL'S FAVORITE FOOD, ISN'T IT?
HE WAS MOODY AS ALWAYS DURING OUR VISIT TO THE GRAVESITE.

AND THAT LOOK ON HIS FACE.
YOU'D ONLY SEE IT...WHEN HE WAS WITH TSUBAKI.

HE WAS SO CLOSE TO HIS LITTLE SISTER.
OH, YOU.

T-THAT'S HIM?!
THAT'S HIM, NO MISTAKE!

OR NO TIME AT ALL ...!

I GOT BORED WAITING AROUND, SO I DECIDED TO SHOW UP EARLY. SORRY.
JUST SO YOU KNOW, ANY TRAP OR AMBUSH IS USELESS AGAINST ME. SO ARE WE ALL ON THE SAME PAGE?

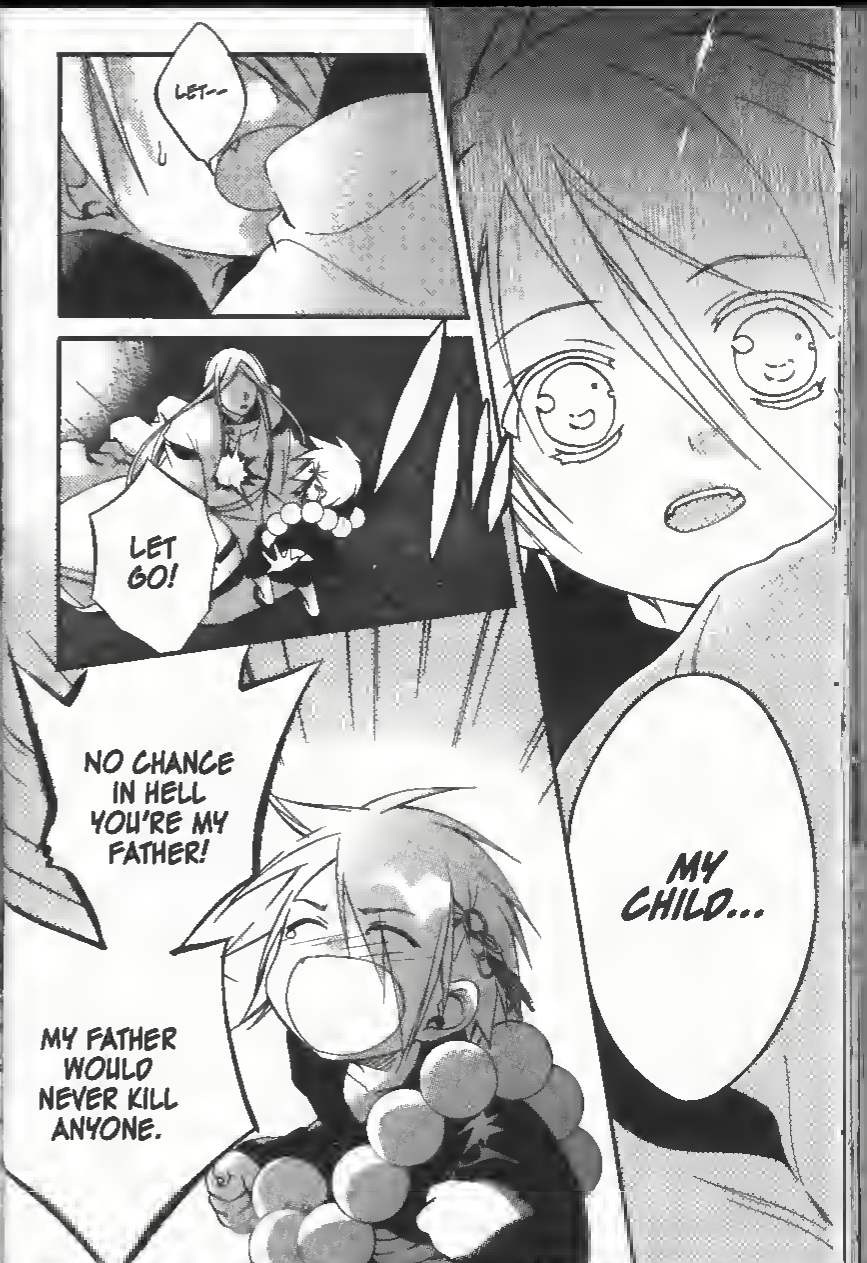
THE CONDITIONS ARE PERFECT TODAY.
OLDER BROTHER, YOU READY?
YES
ゴォォ

MY APOLOGIES.
AH, SO EMBARRASSING.
MY APOLOGIES. MY APOLOGIES.
MY APOLOGIES.

THESE TWO BEFORE ME.
SOMEHOW...I FEEL A DEEP CONNECTION TO THEM.
WHAT?
THAT SPIRIT...
WHERE DID HE COME FROM?!
GET HIM!
WE CAN HANDLE THIS WEAKLING!
DID YOU HURT YOURSELF? OLDER BROTHER?
EX-EXCUSE ME...MY BODY IS PERHAPS UNSTABLE.
WHAT THE HELL? THAT GUY SEEMS FEEBLE.

WHO ARE YOU!?
SON?
NICE TO MEET YOU... HIJIRI.
HEH...
CONDITIONS REALLY ARE EXCELLENT TODAY, AREN'T THEY?
YES...BECAUSE WE'RE IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE PURE BLOOD OF A FELLOW GATE-KEEPER.
AND BECAUSE I AM FINALLY SEEING...
...MY SON AGAIN.

KINDLY... WOULD YOU ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN?
I WILL TELL YOU OUR REASON FOR EXTERMINATING THE MITEDAMASHI AND...
...OUR GRAND PURPOSE.
ﾅﾆ...


LET--
LET GO!
NO CHANCE IN HELL YOU'RE MY FATHER!
MY FATHER WOULD NEVER KILL ANYONE.
MY CHILD...

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
SENJU...IS SCARED.
SENJU.
AHH, BUT...
HUFF.
IT'S TOO MUCH...
HUFF.
IT'S TOO MUCH. SENJU WILL BECOME UPSET, BUT...
THIS FEAR...IS TOO MUCH...
THE FEAR IS CRUSHING ME.
HUFF.
HUFF.
I'M SO SCARED!
I NEED TO... CALM HIM DOWN.
STAY CHEERFUL.
HEH HEH... GETTING...SHOT BY A...GUN... HURTS THIS MUCH, EH?

YOSHITSUNA-SAMA!
THAT DAY... ON THE DAY THAT WE DIED...
I UNDER-STOOD
UGH...

IF YOU HELP ME, MY DAUGHTER WON'T HAVE TO DIE!
"A WORLD WITHOUT DEATH!"
INTELLECTUALLY, I UNDERSTOOD THE FEAR OF DEATH...
...I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT FELT LIKE.
GIVE IT TO US! THE CODE!
IN TRYING TO PRESERVE THE BALANCE OF LIFE AND DEATH...I NEVER REALIZED HOW MUCH SUFFERING AND TERROR DEATH BROUGHT TO PEOPLE.
SO I... DECIDED.

THIS IS...
"THE FEAR OF DEATH."
IT'S ONE OF OUR MOST COMMON FEARS.
SOMEONE'S BODY
EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY DAY, THIS FEAR POSSESSES...

BUT AS LONG AS MITEDAMASHI -- THOSE WITH THE POWER TO OPEN AND CLOSE GATES -- EXISTED, THERE WAS ALWAYS A CHANCE THAT DEATH COULD BE RE-INTRODUCED.
SO...TO FULFILL OUR DREAM OF A DEATHLESS WORLD, I RELUCTANTLY DECIDED TO EXTERMINATE MITEDAMASHI.
...WE CAN REALIZE THE ETERNAL PEACE OF A WORLD WITHOUT DEATH.
WITH THIS NECESSARY SACRIFICE...
GET--
THIS IS FOR YOUR SAKE TOO...HIJIRI
THERE'S NO LOGIC TO KILLING ONE GROUP OF PEOPLE FOR THE SAKE OF EVERYBODY ELSE!
GET REAL!
TO FOREVER CLOSE ALL THE GATES IN THE WORLD...
...AND CREATE A WORLD WITHOUT DEATH.

THAT PERSON.
YOU WILL BE ALONE.
THAT PERSON.
THAT PERSON.
ALL ELSE WILL DIE. SOONER OR LATER ...
CAN YOU ENDURE THAT LONELINESS? THINK CAREFULLY.
INSTEAD, TOGETHER WE CAN CREATE A "DEATHLESS WORLD."
...HAS GIVEN YOU ETERNAL LIFE.
...THE WORLD"...
THAT'S WHY...
SOONER OR LATER THE WORLD WILL BE DESTROYED.
IF YOU SHOULD DIE, THERE WILL BE NO ONE LEFT WITH THE POWER TO BALANCE LIFE AND DEATH.
LEAVING YOU AS THE ONLY "PUREBLOODED" GATE-KEEPER.
NO MATTER MY FORM, I AM ALREADY DEAD.
WHY?
WH--
YOU DON'T AGE. DO YOU KNOW WHY?

WHAT?! THERE WAS SOMEONE HIDING BEHIND US?
GO!
MY NOBLE FATHER... WOULD NEVER HAVE...SUCH A SELFISH IDEA, WOULD HE?
WE GATE-KEEPERS CANNOT INTERFERE WITH THE COURSE OF LIFE AND DEATH.
MICHITATE!!!
NO MATTER WHAT -- STOP MY FATHER!
AS YOU COMMAND.
NO!
I REFUSE!

YOU'VE MADE YOUR DECISION, TSURUGI? I WELCOME YOU.

TSUBAKI... MY LITTLE SISTER... WHO DIED
I WANT TO BRING HER BACK TO LIFE!
"GET A GIRLFRIEND... DEAD PEOPLE STAY DEAD..."

I COULD RIP THIS PLACE APART AND INJURE HUNO-REOS...
...I WOULDN'T CARE, SO LONG AS THAT KID YOU'VE GOT IS UN-HARMED!
TSURUGI, YOU?!
I'M SORRY MICHITATE, I'VE MADE UP MY MIND.
I'M... SELFISH...
AND...I'M SORRY, HIJIRI-SAMA.
AND...
I'D RATHER CHERISH THOSE CLOSEST TO ME THAN WORRY ABOUT THE STATE OF THE WORLD.
THERE'S ONE PERSON I WANT TO SAVE.
NOT ONLY CLOSE TO ME...
BUT A PART OF ME!

I WILL MAKE A PROMISE TO YOU. THE DAY ON WHICH I AM FULLY RECOVERED...I WILL RESURRECT YOUR LITTLE SISTER.
FATHER... DON'T.
YOSHITSUNA!
YOU'RE NO FATHER OF MINE!
THE FATHER I WAS TOLD ABOUT... WASN'T THIS SORT OF PERSON!
LEADING TSURUGI ASTRAY WITH WORDS HE CAN'T REFUSE.
HE'S GOING TO DESTROY THE PAST THE TWO OF THEM SHARED.
I...I CAN'T...I'VE REACHED MY LIMIT FOR TODAY.
SURE, OLDER BROTHER... GO BACK AND REST.
I GUESS WE SHOULD CLEAR OUT TOO LET'S GO, TSURUGI.
HANG ON!
WAIT, YOU...
GREAT
KIKYO.
YOU'RE...A DEMON!
DEMON!

YOU'RE LATE... KIKYO.
SORRY ABOUT THAT. HOW'D IT GO?
I TOOK CARE OF MOST OF THE MITEDAMASHI THAT RAN AWAY.
I WOULDN'T EXPECT ANY LESS.
SURE.
YOU MUST BE WORN OUT? LET'S GET GOING.
LONG TIME NO SEE.

Afterword

I'M SO GRATEFUL! I LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR CONTINUED READERSHIP!
VOL. 2
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR PURCHASING VOLUME 2! THIS IS SUMIYOSHI!
FOND OF EACH AND EVERY ONE!
IN VOLUME 1, I SAIO SENJU WAS MY FAVORITE CHARACTER, BUT NOW, I'VE GROWN FOND OF ALL OF THEM.
A LOT OF NEW CHARACTERS JOINED OUR STORY IN VOLUME 2
I'M DEVOTED TO EACH OF THEM SO MUCH, I SOMETIMES THINK, "I SHOULD MARRY ALL MY CHARACTERS!"

HIJIRI.

3
BLACK GATE

SO WHENEVER I'M BY MYSELF AND I FINISH A BIG JOB...
Ah! Well, that was tough.
BETTER, BUT I'M STILL DOING EVERYTHING ON MY OWN.
I'M DOING BETTER.
Let's go for 2 rounds!
COMPARED TO WHAT IT WAS LIKE DURING VOLUME 1, MY LIFE IS NOW WAY MORE RELAXED
....
IT'S FINISHED!
I did it!
IF ONLY I COULD SHARE THIS FEELING WITH SOMEONE
YOU DID AN AWESOME JOB.
SEE YOU NEXT TIME!
Whoohoo!
WE'RE ALMOST THERE!
IN VOLUME 2, THE STORY REALLY PICKED UP THE PACE. BE SURE CATCH THE CONCLUSION!

terword ■End■